



Staying On Course: What We Stand For in the Scoping Process

April 27, 2022

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) has initiated scoping meetings to ask the Limited Access (LA) scallop fleet whether it supports leasing and what a leasing program should include. They have not provided any information or details regarding what a voluntary leasing program in the LA scallop fishery would include. In fact, they are asking for input this year on that very question.

Unfortunately, there is a possibility that people could misinterpret or even misuse the scoping criteria and scheduled meetings as a chance to critique a leasing program that does not actually exist. That is not what the Scallop Advisory Panel (AP), Scallop Committee or Council intended when it approved scoping as a priority for this year, and it is not what the scoping document covers.

The Scallopers Campaign and our supporters want you to know what we stand for with absolute clarity. We have put forth a number of principles to explain more fully our vision of a fair and effective leasing program. While the leasing program in the General Category scallop fleet provides a general framework, there are other considerations, and we want you to know where we stand.

- **Conservation Neutrality:** A leasing program in the LA scallop fishery should maintain the same number of fishing trips and the same number of pounds landed, just on fewer boats. Leasing should not be used to increase the harvest level or change fishing behavior in the LA scallop fishery. Smaller vessels should not be allowed to lease to larger vessels; leasing should be limited to similar or smaller vessels.
- **No Harm to Other Fisheries:** Understanding that some LA scallop permit holders also hold permits in other fisheries, a successful leasing program will ensure that leasing does not allow for additional fishing effort in other fisheries.
- **No Harm to Other Scallop Fisheries:** Under a voluntary program, owners will have the choice about whether to lease or not. Leasing in the LA scallop fishery should not disadvantage other scallop sectors. Owners that lease should not be able to increase effort in the NGOM scallop fishery or in the general category with any affected vessels.
- **Ownership & Control Caps:** Leasing cannot be used to get around the current 5% ownership and control cap. No owner currently at the cap should be allowed to own or control more than 5% (of permits and vessel allocations) through leasing. The 5% cap applies across the board to maintain the integrity of the ownership cap.

- **Maximum of Two Allocations:** The Scallopers Campaign has advocated for limiting leasing to a maximum of two full allocations per vessel. Since the majority of crew members work on two vessels, due to the current limited fishing opportunities, limiting leasing to two full allocations per vessel will minimize crew disruptions and provide them with safer, more stable work.
- **No Mix and Match:** By maintaining the individual identity of each permit, mixing leased days with allocated days will not be allowed. Vessels should only be allowed to fish under one permit at a time, meaning that fishing behavior and length of trips will not change.

The Scallopers Campaign is confident that if given the opportunity, the AP and Scallop Committee can develop a fair and effective voluntary leasing program in the LA scallop fishery. Supporting the development of a leasing program is only the first step. After the development of a leasing program, the industry and the Council will be much better informed to make a judgement as to whether to approve and proceed with leasing.