



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD
JONATHAN F. MITCHELL, MAYOR

December 1, 2022

Eric Reid, Chair
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Re: Prioritizing Scallop Access to the Northern Edge for 2023

Dear Chairman Reid:

I write to urge the New England Fisheries Management Council to prioritize opening of the Northern Edge under the scallop and habitat plans for 2023. Such action would be consistent with and supportive of the recommendation of both the Scallop and Habitat Committees, each of which voted unanimously to prioritize the Northern Edge for 2023.

As you know, the Port of New Bedford is the most valuable commercial fishing port in the U.S. Its sustained leadership is substantially due to the steady profitability and ongoing responsible management of the scallop industry. The Port supports over 7,000 jobs and more than 400 fishing vessels. Shoreside businesses thrive by providing services to the fishing fleet, and tens of millions of dollars of public and private dollars are currently funding the modernization of port infrastructure.

While there are multiple species that are harvested by New Bedford fishing vessels, scallops are the prime drivers of the port's economy. The fishermen of New Bedford know this, and they take great care in maintaining the resource and recognize the strategic long-term importance of managing the biomass. This why we have such confidence in the recommendations of the two Committees. Opening the Northern Edge would provide a key new source of scallops as other locations recover and scallop recruitment is allowed to take place.

Recent research by Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and others demonstrates that the Northern Edge can sustain scallop fishing. Given this research, I do not see a pressing need to conduct additional research before opening the Northern Edge. Any further delay in opening an area whose recovery is not in serious dispute, could result in negative economic impacts in direct contradiction to National Standard 8.

The Scallop and Habitat Committees should work together to create a precautionary access area program. Both management plans will need to be changed anyway, and both Committees will need to work together to make access a reality. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Jon Mitchell
Mayor, City of New Bedford
Chairman, New Bedford Port Authority