



## SMAST Bycatch Avoidance Program



### Frequently Asked Questions

- **Does SMAST share the data from the bycatch reports?**
  - No. All of the bycatch data that is sent from the vessels to SMAST remains confidential. The data reporting costs of the Bycatch Avoidance Program are funded by the scallop industry. SMAST does not share the vessel reports with NOAA, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, the New England Fisheries Management Council, or any other agency or organization.
  
- **Why does the amount of flounder bycatch matter?**
  - Every fishing year, the scallop fleet is given a certain amount of yellowtail and windowpane flounder (known as a sub-Annual Catch Limits). If the scallop fleet exceeds their sub-Annual Catch Limits, then Accountability Measures (time/area closures or gear modifications) will be put in place for the next fishing year.
  
- **What are the Accountability Measures (AMs)?**
  - For yellowtail, Accountability Measures lead to the closure of large portions of the fishing grounds, either on Georges Bank or in southern New England.
  - For southern windowpane, Accountability Measures require changing dredge configuration to fish in certain areas of southern New England and the Mid-Atlantic.
  - For northern windowpane, Accountability Measures will be developed in 2017 and may include time-area closures.
  
- **Why are you asking for me to report windowpane flounder bycatch?**
  - The New England Fishery Management Council recently voted to implement sub-Annual Catch Limits for northern windowpane flounder. If the scallop fleet exceeds their sub-Annual Catch Limit of windowpane flounder, Accountability Measures will be put into place in the next year.
  
- **Why should I report my bycatch?**
  - The accuracy of the bycatch advisory depends upon the number of reports that SMAST receives from the fleet. As the number of reports increases, it allows us to identify bycatch hotspots more accurately, and provide the best available information to the fishing vessels.
  - The Bycatch Avoidance Program can help the fleet achieve a higher scallop catch while avoiding Accountability Measures.

- **Why do you ask for my scallop catches?**
  - In order to determine whether bycatch is high, medium or low, we examine the catch of flounder relative to the catch of scallops for each cell.
  - As the scallop catch rate decreases even small amounts of flounder will increase the overall bycatch rate.
- **How much bycatch is too much?**
  - The bycatch thresholds are set based upon the allocation of scallops and flounder in that area. For Closed Area II, the thresholds are projected from previous years' observer data.
- **How does SMAST determine if a grid cell has high, medium or low bycatch?**
  - For each grid cell, we calculate the average bycatch reported by all of the vessels that have fished in that cell. The calculations are updated every day as SMAST receives new data from the fleet.
- **How does NOAA estimate the amount of bycatch in the scallop fishery?**
  - Bycatch for the scallop fishery is estimated using observer data. Approximately 10% of all scallop trips have an observer onboard. NOAA assumes that the bycatch rates of observed and unobserved trips are the same when they estimate the total bycatch in the scallop fishery.
- **Who can I contact at SMAST to get more information?**
  - **To get more information about the Bycatch Avoidance program please contact:**
    - **Brooke Wright ([brooke.wright@umassd.edu](mailto:brooke.wright@umassd.edu), 508-910-6372)**
    - **visit our website at: [www.umassd.edu/smast/bycatch](http://www.umassd.edu/smast/bycatch)**