

5-minute VMS reporting rate in the federal waters scallop fishery

Connor Buckley

New England Fishery Management Council Staff



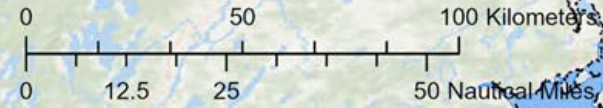
New England
Fishery Management Council

What is happening?

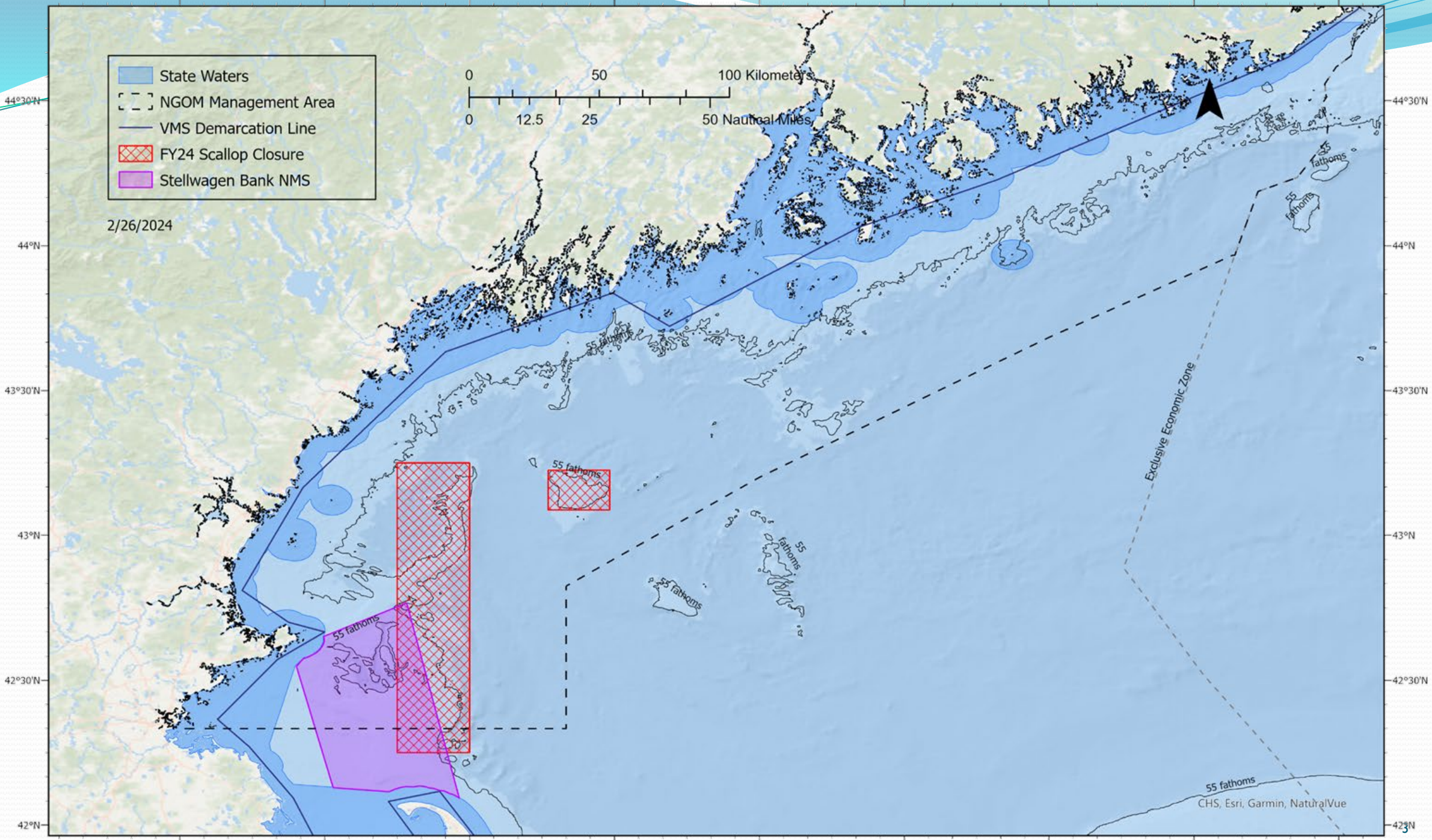
As of April 1, 2024:

1. All vessels with active VMS units will report at 5-minute intervals when seaward of the VMS demarcation line **while on a scallop declaration**. This will not apply to vessels participating in state-waters exemption program.
 - This is unrelated to the electronic reporting requirement for commercial lobster license holders.
2. All vessels **on a scallop declaration** will be prohibited from entering or transiting scallop rotational areas and the Western Gulf of Maine closure unless on a declared access area trip.

- State Waters
- NGOM Management Area
- VMS Demarcation Line
- FY24 Scallop Closure
- Stellwagen Bank NMS



2/26/2024



Why did this happen?

- The Scallop PDT has noted that scallop rotational area boundaries can bisect high densities of scallops where open bottom fishing is allowed on one side of the boundary.
- This situation occurs in several parts of the resource, including the southern border of the WGOM Closure with open bottom to the south, and the NGOM Management Area to the west
- The Scallop Advisory Panel and NOAA Enforcement have noted instances of vessels entering closed areas and exiting before their next VMS ping.

What are the expected outcomes?

- Increasing the VMS reporting rate to 5-minutes on declared scallop trips will improve enforcement of access area and closure boundaries by substantially reducing the window in which a vessel can enter a closed area or access area undetected.
- Increasing the VMS reporting rate in the scallop fishery will improve data quality by increasing the spatial resolution of the data, which could lead to more effective management and enforcement.

What will this cost?

- Average vessel costs could increase by ~\$350 to \$550 per year
 - The current reporting rate costs \$0.06/hour (\$1.44/day), 24/7
 - The increased rate will likely cost \$0.26-\$0.36/hour, only when seaward of demarcation on a scallop declaration code.
- The actual cost will be dependent upon your VMS provider, unit, and service plan. Many VMS providers offer reduced service rates during months that data needs are lower.
- The cost is dependent on the amount of time you spend on a scallop declaration. For those that only participate in the NGOM scallop fishery, the cost increase will be less.

What action is needed?

- Contact your VMS vendor to ensure that you are on the least expensive plan that meets your data needs given this increased reporting rate



Questions?

Extra slides

Council passed the following motion in September that tasked the Scallop PDT with developing management measures that consider increasing VMS report rates the scallop fishing to improve enforcement in the fishery. The approach was first recommended by the Scallop Advisors at their meeting on September 20, 2023, and supported by the Scallop Committee.

Framework 38

1. Ms. Griffin on behalf of the Committee:
that the Council add the following 2023 work priority:
Develop management measures that consider increasing VMS ping rates in Framework 38 for the scallop fishery for FY2024 to improve enforcement in fishery.

The Council agreed by consensus.

Rationale for Exploring Higher VMS Report Rates

- Management boundaries bisect high densities of scallops where open bottom fishing is allowed on one side of boundary, such as:
 - Around Area II along the western border of Area II access area and open bottom
 - Open area on the NF that abuts the CAII North
 - Area I Sliver and open bottom in the GSC.
 - Areas around the southern extent of the WGOM closed area, where open bottom fishing occurs to the south, and the NGOM Management Area to the west.
 - Along the inshore boundaries of the NYB Closure.
- VMS is used in the scallop fishery as an enforcement tool. The current interval of report rates is every 30 minutes. Vessels are currently able to time their VMS ping and enter a closure, fish, and exit before the next ping.

Additional measures to improve closure enforcement

1. “Entry/Exit” reporting

- Reports entry/exit of geofence boundary without general increase in VMS reporting interval

2. “Port Mode”

- Reduce VMS reporting rate when vessel is stationary in port (4-12 hour interval), decreasing VMS costs. Vessels that participate in other fisheries may be subject to additional minimum reporting requirements

3. Defining all scallop rotational closures as “No Transit”.

- Prevent transit across all scallop closures, except in defined ‘transit corridors’.

4. Adding language to the scallop regulations that defines the term “transit”.

- No language currently defines the term ‘transit’. Doing so would improve NOAA OLE ability to enforce closures using VMS.