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Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat
Maritimes Region | Science Response 2025/006

STOCK STATUS UPDATE OF SCALLOP (*PLACOPECTEN MAGELLANICUS*) IN SCALLOP PRODUCTION AREAS 1 TO 6 IN THE BAY OF FUNDY

CONTEXT

Harvesting of Sea Scallop (*Placopecten magellanicus*) in the Bay of Fundy (BoF) and Approaches includes commercial, communal commercial, and communal Food, Social, and Ceremonial (FSC) harvesting. Advice on the status of Scallop in Scallop Production Areas (SPAs) 1 to 6 in the BoF is requested annually by Resource Management Branch, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Maritimes Region, to help determine a Total Allowable Catch (TAC, meat weight) in support of the commercial component of the fishery. The purpose of this report is to update the stock status of Scallop in SPAs 1 to 6 with data from the 2024 Scallop survey and fishery (October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024). The last Regional Advisory Process of the BoF Scallop stocks occurred in 2015 (DFO 2016, Nasmith et al. 2016); updates have been conducted since. The last update was in November 2023 (DFO 2024).

This Science Response Report results from the regional peer review of November 22, 2024, on the Stock Status Update of Bay of Fundy Scallop in Scallop Production Areas (SPAs) 1A, 1B, and 3-6.

BACKGROUND

There are three commercial fleets (Full Bay, Mid Bay, and Upper Bay) in the inshore BoF Scallop fishery (Figure A1 in Appendix). Full Bay license holders are permitted to fish throughout the BoF. Mid Bay license holders have access to all areas north of the Mid Bay line. Upper Bay license holders are restricted to the upper reaches of the Bay. The fishery is managed using limited entry, drag gear size limits, seasonal closures, minimum shell height, and meat count. The drag gear width limit is 5.5 metres (m) with a ring size of not less than 82 mm inside diameter. The Full Bay Fleet operates under an Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system, while the Mid Bay and Upper Bay fleets fish with competitive quotas. Total Allowable Catches and landings are reported in terms of meat weights (adductor muscles).

The BoF Inshore Scallop survey is conducted annually by DFO Science. The population dynamics of commercial and recruit Scallops for all SPAs (Figure A1) were modelled using a Bayesian state-space model with modifications presented in Smith et al. (2012) and Smith and Hubley (2014). A detailed description of survey design and strata boundaries is presented in Nasmith et al. (2016). In this report, Scallops with a shell height of 80 mm and greater are referred to as commercial size. Scallops with a shell height of 65–79 mm are referred to as recruits and are expected to grow to be commercial size in the following year. Scallops less than 65 mm are defined as pre-recruits. Scallop removals accounted for in assessments include commercial landings from all three inshore Scallop fleets (including communal commercial) and communal FSC catch by Scallop drag. Landed recreational and FSC catch by dip netting, diving, tongs, and hand are not accounted for in the assessment. Landing values from 2024 are preliminary (Table A1 in Appendix). In 2020 there was no survey. The indices used as input for

the model in 2020 are imputed using the 2019 and 2021 values; this approach is consistent with methods used to address missing information in previous years (e.g., Nasmith et al. 2016).

ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE

Indicators of Stock Status

Scallop Condition

In 2023, Scallop condition (meat weight given shell height), as measured by the Bay of Fundy Inshore Scallop Survey, was well above historically observed values and caused substantial increases in biomass across the BoF without commensurate increases in abundance (Figure 1, and DFO 2024). In 2024, condition declined (by up to 43%) and returned to levels that are similar to historic values; the decline from 2023 to 2024 was the largest decline in Scallop condition between subsequent years for all areas in the time-series. Although commercial abundances are similar or declined slightly across all areas from 2023 to 2024, the decline in condition has resulted in substantial declines in commercial biomass indices across all areas in 2024 (ranging from 28% to 47%; Figure 1); however, the declines in commercial biomass were not unexpected (DFO 2024).

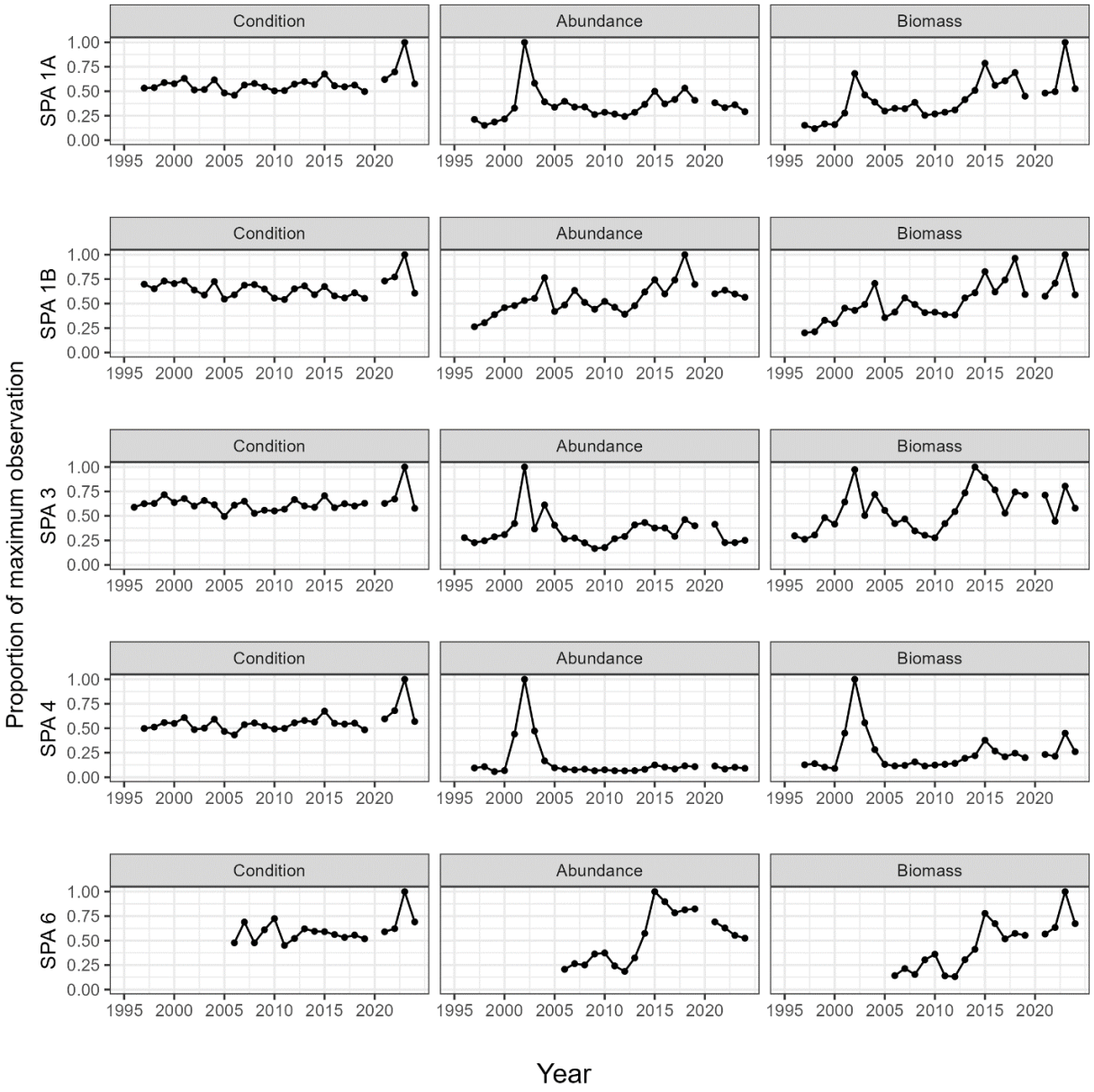

Figure 1. Survey indices of Scallop condition, abundance, and biomass presented as proportions relative to the time-series maximum for SPAs 1A, 1B, 3, 4, and 6 (SPA 1A, 1B and 4 [1997–2024]; SPA 3 [1996–2024]; SPA 6 [2006–2024]). There was no survey in 2020.

Scallop Production Area 1A Stock Status

The biomass estimate of commercial Scallops in 2024 was 2,774 t (meats), which is above the long-term (1997–2023) median of 2,082 t; the probability that the 2024 biomass is currently above the upper stock reference (USR) and in the healthy zone is greater than 0.99 (Figure 2). The 2023 commercial biomass estimate was 4,994 t. The biomass estimate of recruit Scallops in 2024 was 3.5 t, which is below the long-term (1997–2023) median of 53.9 t. The 2023 biomass estimate of recruit Scallop was 43.7 t.

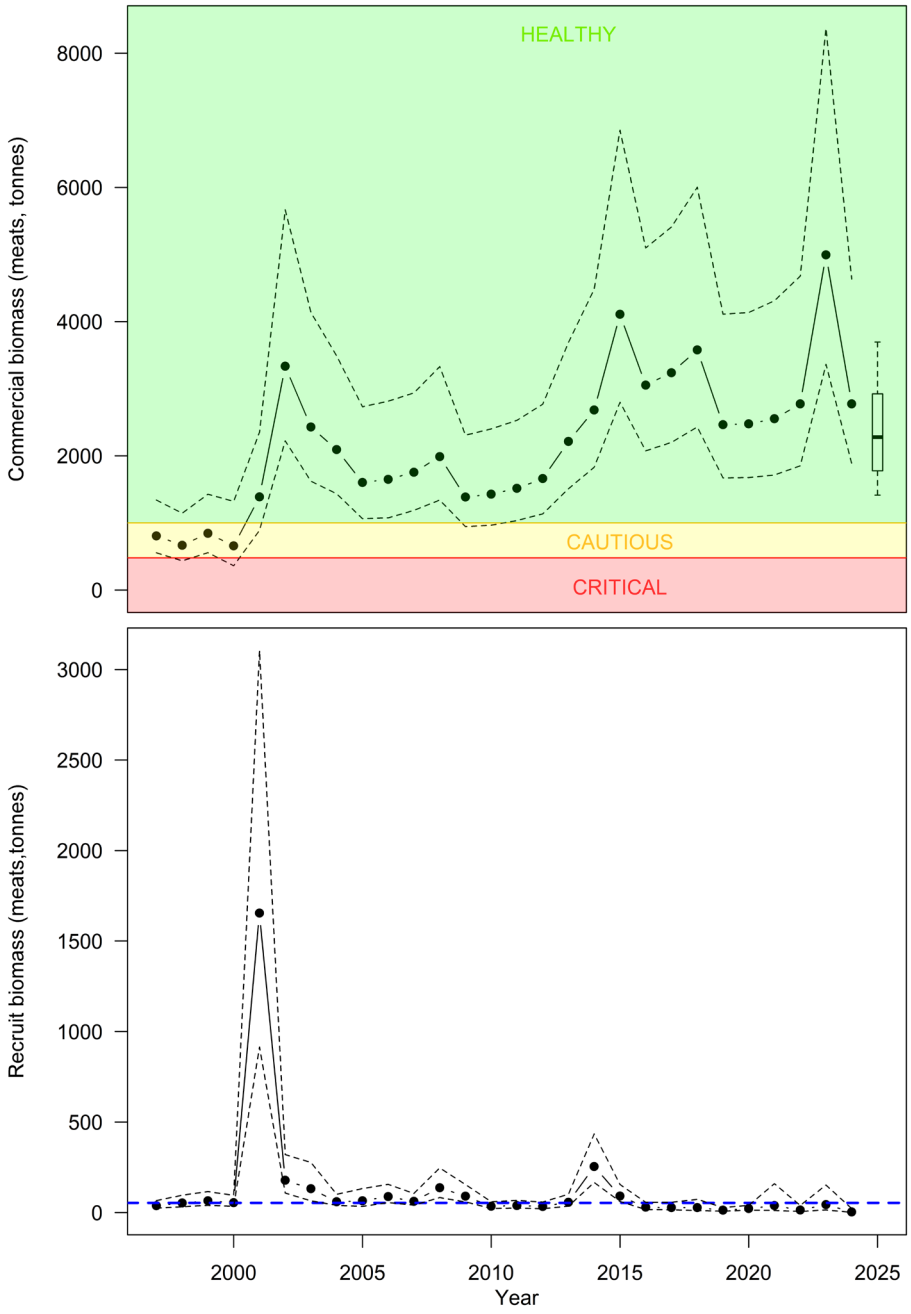

Figure 2. Median biomass estimates in SPA 1A for commercial (top panel) and recruit (bottom panel) size Scallops in meat weight (tonnes) from the assessment model fit to the survey and commercial data. Dashed lines are the upper and lower 95% credible limits on the estimates. The predicted commercial size biomass for 2025, assuming the 2024–25 interim TAC (250 t), is displayed as a box plot with median, 50% credible limits (box) and 80% credible limits (whiskers). The green-shaded area represents the healthy zone (based on an upper stock reference [USR] point of 1,000 t), the yellow-shaded area represents the cautious zone, and red-shaded area represents the critical zone (based on limit reference point [LRP] of 480 t; Nasmith et al. [2014]). The blue horizontal dashed line in the lower panel represents the long-term median (1997–2023) recruit biomass.

Catch scenarios for the 2024–25 fishing season are presented in Table 1. Biomass projections use the current year estimates of growth whereas natural mortality is the average over the last 5 years. For example, Table 1 is interpreted as follows: a catch of 200 t corresponds to an exploitation of 0.08 and is projected to result in a 17% decline in commercial biomass, the probability of commercial biomass increase is 24%, the probability that a catch of 200 t will result in the population remaining above the limit reference point (LRP) is greater than 99%, and the probability of the population remaining above the USR is 98%. In the following fishing year (2025–26), a catch of 216 t would have a probability of 10% of exceeding a removal reference exploitation of 0.15.

Table 1. Harvest scenario table for SPA 1A to evaluate 2024–25 catch levels in terms of resulting exploitation (e), expected changes in commercial biomass (%), probability (Pr) of commercial biomass increase, probability that after removal the stock will be above the Upper Stock Reference (USR; 1,000 t), and above the limit reference point (LRP; 480 t). Potential catches (t) in 2025–26 are evaluated in terms of the posterior probability of exceeding a removal reference exploitation of 0.15. (>) = greater than.

2024–25 Fishing Season						2025–26 Fishing Season Probability Exploitation >0.15 *Potential Catch (t)*					
Catch (t)	***e***	**% Change**	**Pr Increase**	**Pr > LRP**	**Pr > USR**	**0.1**	**0.2**	**0.3**	**0.4**	**0.5**	**0.6**
175	0.07	–16	0.26	> 0.99	0.98	219	259	291	322	352	387
200	0.08	–17	0.24	> 0.99	0.98	216	256	288	317	348	382
225	0.09	–18	0.23	> 0.99	0.98	214	252	284	314	345	379
250	0.10	–19	0.22	> 0.99	0.98	211	250	281	311	342	375
275	0.11	–20	0.21	> 0.99	0.98	208	247	278	308	338	372
300	0.12	–21	0.20	> 0.99	0.98	206	243	274	303	334	368
325	0.13	–21	0.19	> 0.99	0.97	205	242	273	301	331	364
350	0.14	–22	0.18	> 0.99	0.97	202	239	269	298	327	360
375	0.15	–23	0.17	> 0.99	0.97	198	236	266	294	324	357

Scallop Production Area 1B Stock Status

The biomass estimate of commercial Scallops in 2024 was 3,313 t (meats), which is above the long-term (1997–2023) median of 2,979 t; the probability that the 2024 biomass is currently above the USR and in the healthy zone is greater than 0.99 (Figure 3). The 2023 commercial biomass estimate was 5,713 t. The biomass estimate of recruit Scallops in 2024 was 45.6 t, which is below the long-term (1997–2023) median of 155.8 t. The 2023 biomass estimate of recruit Scallop was 119.1 t.

Catch scenarios for the 2024–25 fishing season are presented in Table 2. Biomass projections use the current year estimates of growth whereas natural mortality is the average over the last 5 years. See SPA 1A Stock Status section in this document for an example of interpreting the table.

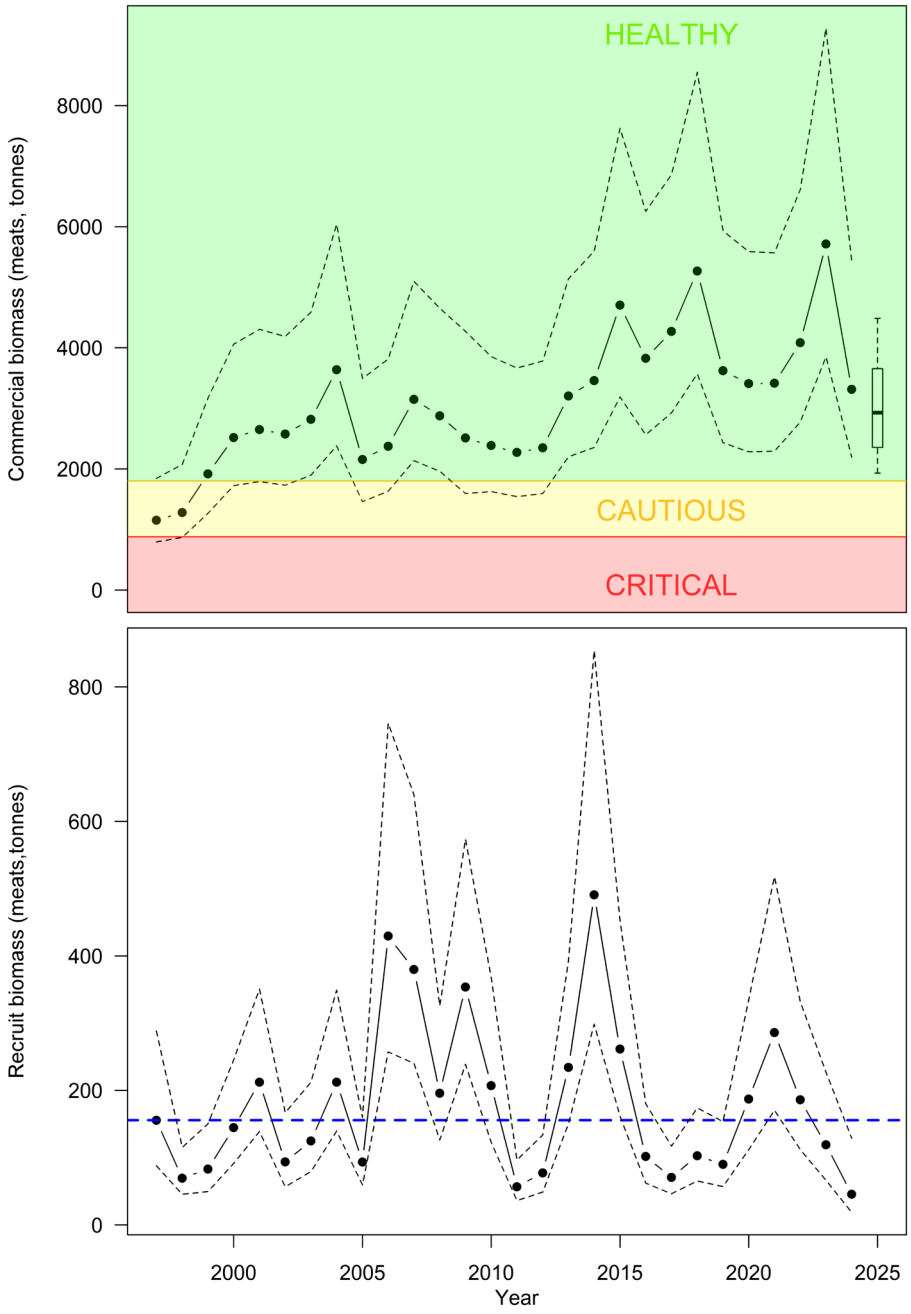

Figure 3. Median biomass estimates in SPA 1B for commercial (top panel) and recruit (bottom panel) size Scallops in meat weight (tonnes) from the assessment model fit to the survey and commercial data. Dashed lines are the upper and lower 95% credible limits on the estimates. The predicted commercial size biomass for 2025, assuming the 2024–25 interim TAC (200 t), is displayed as a box plot with median, 50% credible limits (box) and 80% credible limits (whiskers). The green-shaded area represents the healthy zone (based on an upper stock reference [USR] point of 1,800 t), the yellow-shaded area represents the cautious zone, and red-shaded area represents the critical zone (based on limit reference point [LRP] of 880 t; Nasmith et al. [2014]). The blue horizontal dashed line in the lower panel represents the long-term median (1997–2023) recruit biomass.

Table 2. Harvest scenario table for SPA 1B to evaluate 2024–25 catch levels in terms of resulting exploitation (e), expected changes in commercial biomass (%), probability (Pr) of commercial biomass increase, probability that after removal the stock will be above the Upper Stock Reference (USR; 1,800 t), and above the limit reference point (LRP; 880 t). Potential catches (t) in 2025–26 are evaluated in terms of the posterior probability of exceeding a removal reference exploitation of 0.15. (>) = greater than.

2024–25 Fishing Season						2025–26 Fishing Season Probability Exploitation >0.15 Potential Catch (t)					
Catch (t)	*e*	% Change	Pr Increase	Pr > LRP	Pr > USR	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6
200	0.06	–12	0.28	> 0.99	0.93	290	336	373	406	440	478
225	0.07	–13	0.27	> 0.99	0.93	287	332	368	402	436	474
250	0.08	–13	0.26	> 0.99	0.92	284	329	364	398	433	472
275	0.09	–14	0.24	0.99	0.92	282	326	362	395	429	467
300	0.10	–15	0.23	0.99	0.91	279	322	358	392	426	464
325	0.10	–15	0.22	0.99	0.90	275	320	355	389	423	460
350	0.11	–16	0.21	0.99	0.90	273	317	352	386	419	456
375	0.12	–17	0.20	0.99	0.89	270	314	349	382	416	453
400	0.13	–18	0.19	0.99	0.89	267	311	346	379	413	449
425	0.14	–18	0.18	0.99	0.88	265	308	342	376	409	446
450	0.14	–19	0.17	0.99	0.88	261	304	339	372	406	443
475	0.15	–20	0.16	0.99	0.87	258	301	336	368	402	438

Scallop Production Area 2

Scallop Production Area 2 is considered to be marginal habitat for Scallops and is not monitored regularly. This area was last assessed in 2006 (DFO 2007).

Scallop Production Area 3 Stock Status

The biomass estimate of commercial Scallops in 2024 was 1,609 t (meats), which is below the long-term (1996–2023) median of 1,625 t; the probability that the 2024 biomass is currently above the USR and in the healthy zone is 0.98 (Figure 4). The 2023 commercial biomass estimate was 2,388 t. The biomass estimate of recruit Scallops in 2024 was 10.4 t, which is below the long-term (1996–2023) median of 53.1 t. The 2023 biomass estimate of recruit Scallop was 17.9 t.

Catch scenarios for the 2024–25 fishing season are presented in Table 3. Biomass projections use the current year estimates of growth whereas natural mortality is the average over the last 5 years. See SPA 1A Stock Status section in this document for an example of interpreting the table.

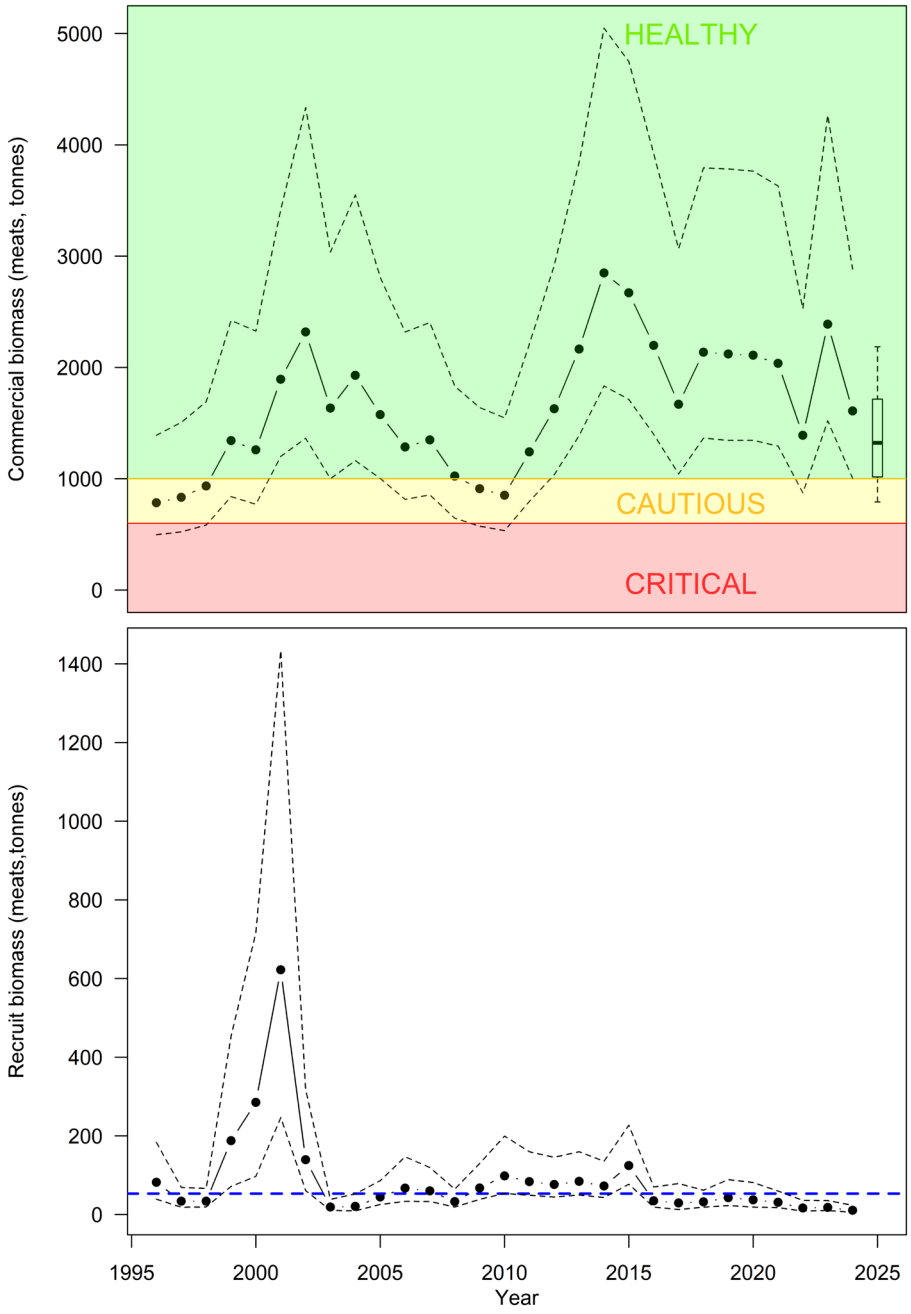

Figure 4. Median biomass estimates in SPA 3 for commercial (top panel) and recruit (bottom panel) size Scallops in meat weight (tonnes) from the assessment model fit to the survey and commercial data. Dashed lines are the upper and lower 95% credible limits on the estimates. The predicted commercial size biomass for 2025, assuming the 2024–25 interim TAC (100 t), is displayed as a box plot with median, 50% credible limits (box) and 80% credible limits (whiskers). The green-shaded area represents the healthy zone (based on an upper stock reference [USR] point of 1,000 t), the yellow-shaded area represents the cautious zone, and red-shaded area represents the critical zone (based on limit reference roint [LRP] of 600 t; Nasmith et al. [2014]). The blue horizontal dashed line in the lower panel represents the long-term median (1996–2023) recruit biomass.

Table 3. Harvest scenario table for SPA 3 to evaluate 2024–25 catch levels in terms of resulting exploitation (e), expected changes in commercial biomass (%), probability (Pr) of commercial biomass increase, probability that after removal the stock will be above the upper stock reference (USR; 1,000 t), and above the limit reference point (LRP; 600 t). Potential catches (t) in 2025–26 are evaluated in terms of the posterior probability of exceeding a removal reference exploitation of 0.15. (>) = greater than.

2024–25 Fishing Season						2025–26 Fishing Season Probability Exploitation >0.15 Potential Catch (t)					
Catch (t)	***e***	**% Change**	**Pr Increase**	**Pr > LRP**	**Pr > USR**	**0.1**	**0.2**	**0.3**	**0.4**	**0.5**	**0.6**
100	0.07	–19	0.22	0.97	0.76	119	142	161	180	198	220
120	0.08	–20	0.21	0.97	0.75	117	140	160	178	196	217
140	0.10	–21	0.20	0.96	0.73	115	138	156	175	193	214
160	0.11	–22	0.18	0.96	0.72	113	136	155	173	191	211
180	0.12	–23	0.16	0.96	0.71	111	134	152	170	188	208
200	0.14	–24	0.15	0.95	0.69	109	131	149	167	185	205
220	0.15	–25	0.14	0.95	0.68	106	129	147	164	182	202

Scallop Production Area 4 and 5 Stock Status

SPA 4

The biomass estimate of commercial Scallops in 2024 was 1,673 t (meats), which is above the long-term (1983–2023) median of 1,179 t; the probability that the 2024 biomass is currently above the USR and in the healthy zone is greater than 0.99 (Figure 5). The 2023 commercial biomass estimate was 2,878 t. The biomass estimate of recruit Scallops in 2024 was 1.4 t, which is below the long-term (1983–2023) median of 26.8 t. The 2023 biomass estimate of recruit Scallop was 8.2 t.

Catch scenarios for the 2024–25 fishing season are presented in Table 4. Biomass projections use the current year estimates of growth whereas natural mortality is the average over the last 5 years. See SPA 1A Stock Status section in this document for an example of interpreting the table.

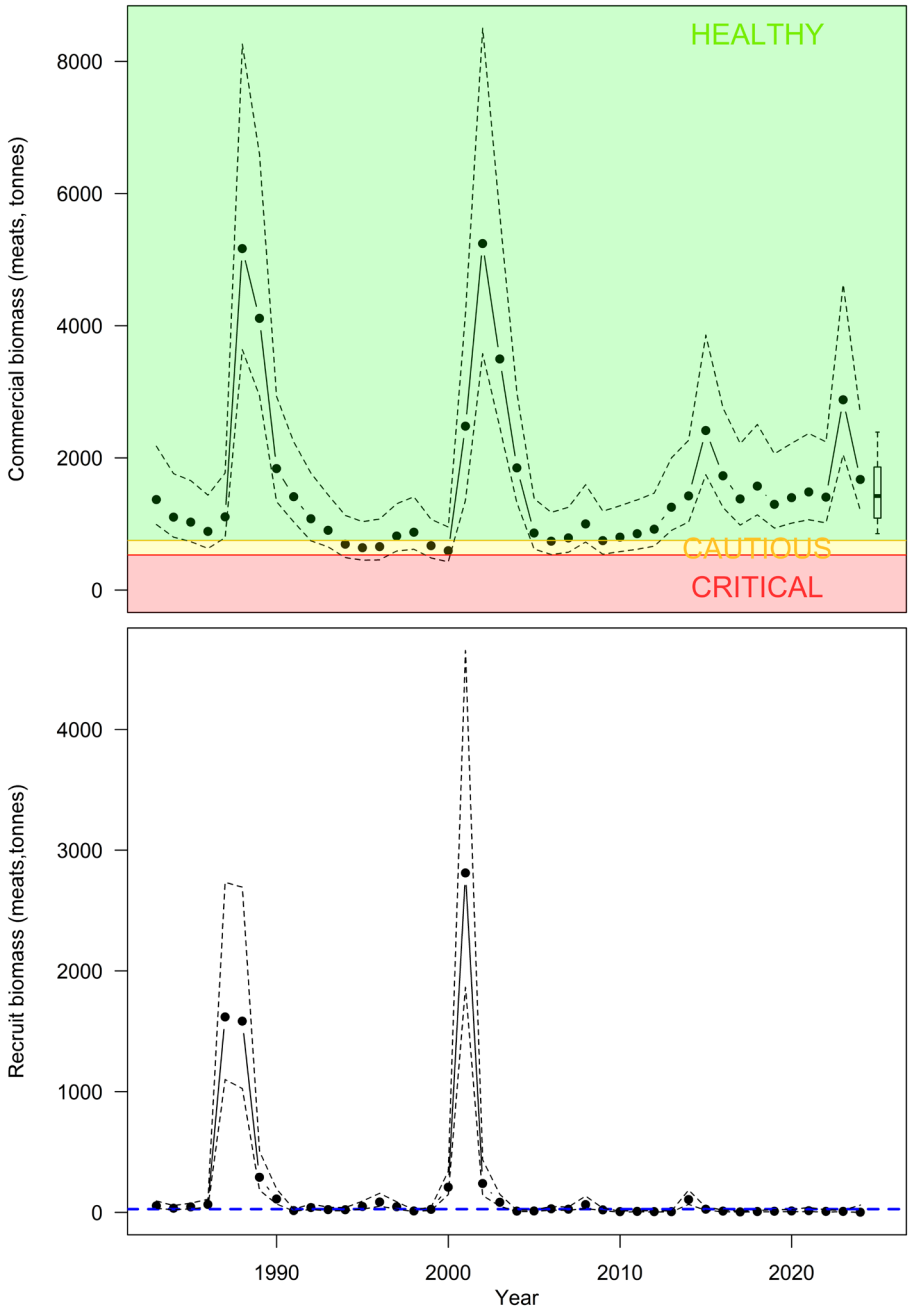

Figure 5. Median biomass estimates in SPA 4 for commercial (top panel) and recruit (bottom panel) size Scallops in meat weight (tonnes) from the assessment model fit to the survey and commercial data. Dashed lines are the upper and lower 95% credible limits on the estimates. The predicted commercial size biomass for 2025, assuming the 2024–25 interim TAC (150 t), is displayed as a box plot with median, 50% credible limits (box) and 80% credible limits (whiskers). The green-shaded area represents the healthy zone (based on an upper stock reference [USR] point of 750 t), the yellow-shaded area represents the cautious zone, and red-shaded area represents the critical zone (based on limit reference point [LRP] of 530 t; Nasmith et al. [2014]). The blue horizontal dashed line in the lower panel represents the long-term median (1983–2023) recruit biomass.

Table 4. Harvest scenario table for SPA 4 to evaluate 2024–25 catch levels in terms of resulting exploitation (e), expected changes in commercial biomass (%), probability (Pr) of commercial biomass increase, probability that after removal the stock will be above the upper stock reference (USR; 750 t), and above the limit reference point (LRP; 530 t). Potential catches (t) in 2025–26 are evaluated in terms of the posterior probability of exceeding a removal reference exploitation of 0.15. (>) = greater than.

2024–25 Fishing Season						2025–26 Fishing Season Probability Exploitation >0.15 Potential Catch (t)					
Catch (t)	***e***	**% Change**	**Pr Increase**	**Pr > LRP**	**Pr > USR**	**0.1**	**0.2**	**0.3**	**0.4**	**0.5**	**0.6**
120	0.08	–15	0.32	0.99	0.95	131	156	178	197	217	240
140	0.09	–16	0.31	0.99	0.94	129	154	175	195	215	238
160	0.10	–17	0.29	0.99	0.94	127	152	172	191	212	234
180	0.12	–18	0.28	0.99	0.93	125	149	169	189	208	230
200	0.13	–19	0.26	0.99	0.93	124	148	168	187	207	228
220	0.14	–20	0.25	0.98	0.92	121	145	165	183	203	225
240	0.15	–21	0.23	0.98	0.92	120	143	162	180	200	221

SPA 5

The annual survey in SPA 5 was discontinued in 2009 after consultation with industry, and the sampling effort was redirected to other areas in the BoF. Since the 2014 survey, a small number (n = 5) of tows have been conducted in SPA 5 annually, with the exception of 2020. Survey trends are compared to the historic long-term medians (1990–2008). The commercial weight per tow in 2024 was 0.7 kilograms per tow (kg/tow) which is below the historic long-term (1990–2008) median (1.4 kg/tow); commercial weight per tow in 2023 was 1.6 kg/tow. Recruit weight per tow in 2024 was 0.01 kg/tow and below the historic long-term (1990–2008) median (0.1 kg/tow); recruit weight per tow in 2023 was 0.02 kg/tow.

Scallop Production Area 6 Stock Status

For SPA 6, biomass based candidate reference points were recommended by the Inshore Scallop Advisory Committee (ISAC) and approved by DFO in December, 2022. The USR is 471 t and the LRP is 236 t. The removal reference exploitation is 18%. Prior to 2023, SPA 6 used catch based reference points (Nasmith et al. 2016).

The productivity of Scallops is tied closely to habitat suitability; in the absence of detailed habitat information the spatial distribution of fishing effort can be a good indicator of suitable habitat (Smith et al. 2009, Brown et al. 2012, Sameoto et al. 2014, Smith et al. 2015). The modelled area for SPA 6 corresponds to an area of historically high fishing intensity as described in Nasmith et al. (2016). However, unlike other SPAs in the BoF, the modelled area of SPA 6 represents a subset of the core Scallop habitat (Nasmith et al. 2016). The proportion of landings associated with the modelled area ranged from 58–81% between 2006 and 2023.

In 2024, the proportion of landings that came from the modelled area was 62%. The biomass estimate of commercial Scallops in the modelled area in 2024 was 1,358 t (meats), which is above the long-term (2006–2023) median of 890 t; the probability that the 2024 biomass is currently above the USR and in the healthy zone is greater than 0.99 (Figure 6). The 2023 commercial biomass estimate was 2,015 t. The biomass estimate of recruit Scallops in 2024 was 1.7 t, which is below the long-term (2006–2023) median of 37.7 t. The 2023 biomass estimate of recruit Scallop was 8.4 t.

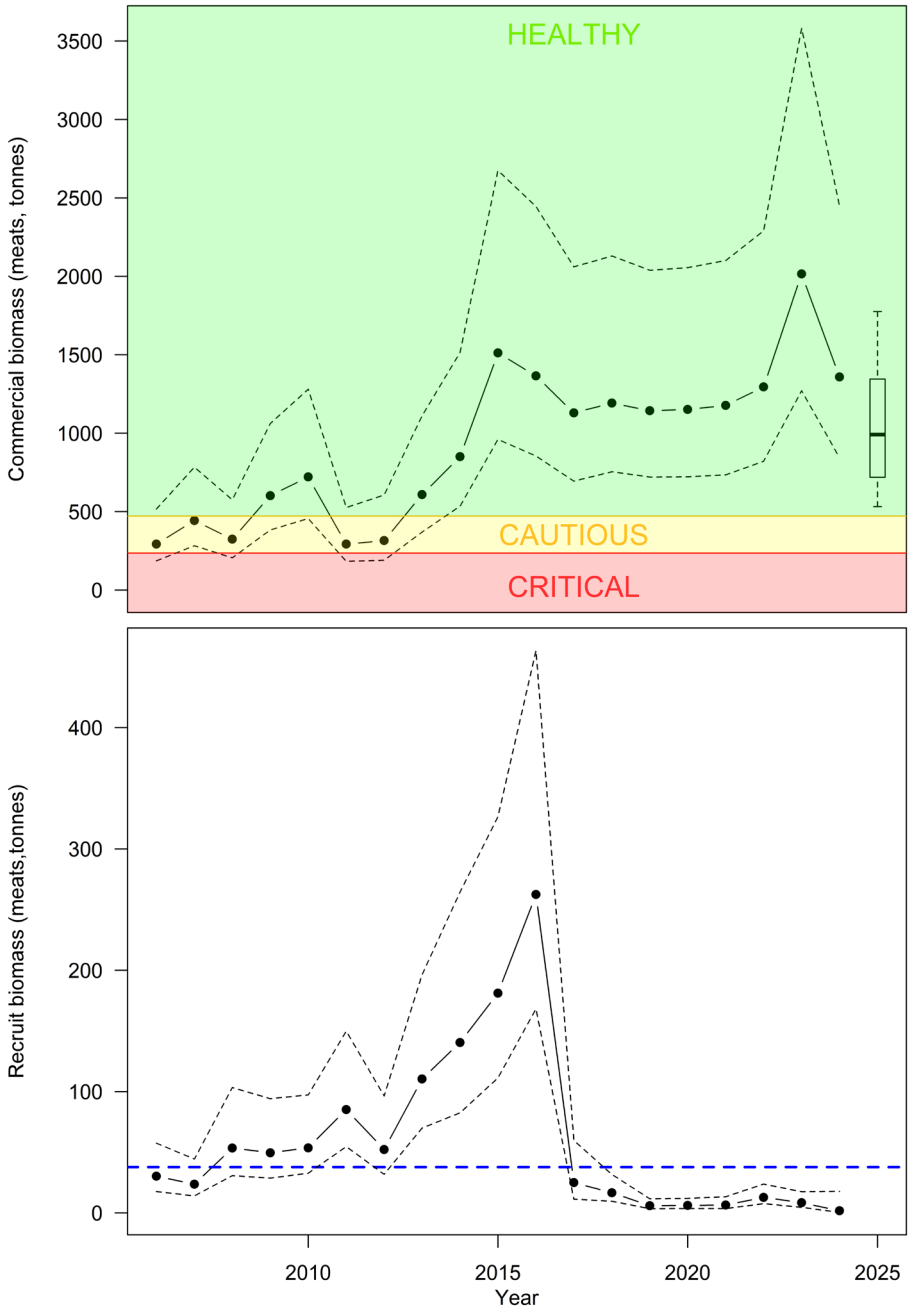

Figure 6. Median biomass estimates (solid line) in the SPA 6 modelled area for commercial (top panel) and recruit (bottom panel) size Scallops in meat weight (tonnes) from the assessment model fit to the survey and commercial data. Dashed lines are the upper and lower 95% credible limits on the estimates. The predicted commercial size biomass for 2025, assuming a catch of 330 t in the modelled area in 2025, is displayed as a box plot with median, 50% credible limits (box) and 80% credible limits (whiskers). The green-shaded area represents the healthy zone (based on an upper stock reference [USR] point of 471 t), the yellow-shaded area represents the cautious zone, and red-shaded area represents the critical zone (based on limit reference point [LRP] of 236 t). The blue horizontal dashed line in the lower panel represents the long-term median (2006–2023) recruit biomass.

Biomass projections use the current year estimates of growth whereas natural mortality is the average over the last 5 years. SPA 6 does not have an interim TAC; the biomass projections assume the same proportion of catch in the modelled area as the current year. Catch scenarios for 2024–25 are presented in Table 5. Table 5 is interpreted as follows, a catch of 120 t in the modelled area of SPA 6 would correspond to an exploitation of 0.09 and is projected to result in a 14% decline in commercial biomass in the modelled area, the probability of commercial biomass increase in the modelled area is 31%. The probability that a catch of 120 t will result in the population remaining above the LRP is 99%, and the probability of the population remaining above the USR is 98%. Conditional on the proportion of catch from the modelled area staying the same in 2025 as in 2024, a catch of 120 t from the modelled area would correspond to a total SPA 6 catch of 194 t.

Table 5. Harvest scenario table for the SPA 6 modelled area to evaluate 2024–25 catch levels in terms of resulting exploitation (e), expected changes in commercial biomass (%), probability (Pr) of commercial biomass increase. The probability that after removal the stock will be above the Upper Stock Reference (USR; 471 t), and above the limit reference point (LRP; 236 t). Corresponding catch levels for the whole area of SPA 6 are conditional on the proportion of catch from the modelled area staying the same in 2025 as in 2024 (62%). (>) = greater than.

2024–25 Fishing Season						
		Modelled Area				*Whole Area*
Catch (t)	***e***	**% Change**	**Pr Increase**	**Pr > LRP**	**Pr > USR**	**Catch (t)**
100	0.08	–12	0.33	0.99	0.98	161
120	0.09	–14	0.31	0.99	0.98	194
140	0.11	–15	0.29	0.99	0.98	226
160	0.12	–16	0.27	0.99	0.97	258
180	0.14	–18	0.26	0.99	0.97	290
200	0.15	–19	0.24	0.99	0.97	323
220	0.17	–20	0.22	0.99	0.96	355
240	0.18	–22	0.21	0.99	0.96	387

Ecosystem Considerations

Currently, there is no DFO requirement that SPAs 1–6 trips be observed. Refer to Sameoto and Glass (2012) for past analysis of discards from the Inshore Scallop fishery.

CONCLUSIONS

In 2024, Scallop condition declined (by up to 43%) and returned to levels that are similar to historic values. The decline in condition from 2023 to 2024 was the largest decline in Scallop condition between subsequent years for all areas in the time-series. Although commercial abundances are similar or declined slightly across all areas from 2023 to 2024, the decline in condition has resulted in substantial declines in commercial biomass across all areas in 2024. In 2024, all SPAs remained in the healthy zone. The biomass estimates of commercial Scallop for SPAs 1A, 1B, 4, and 6 were above their long-term medians, whereas for SPA 3 it was below its long-term median. The biomass estimates of recruit Scallop for all SPAs were below their respective long term medians.

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APPENDIX

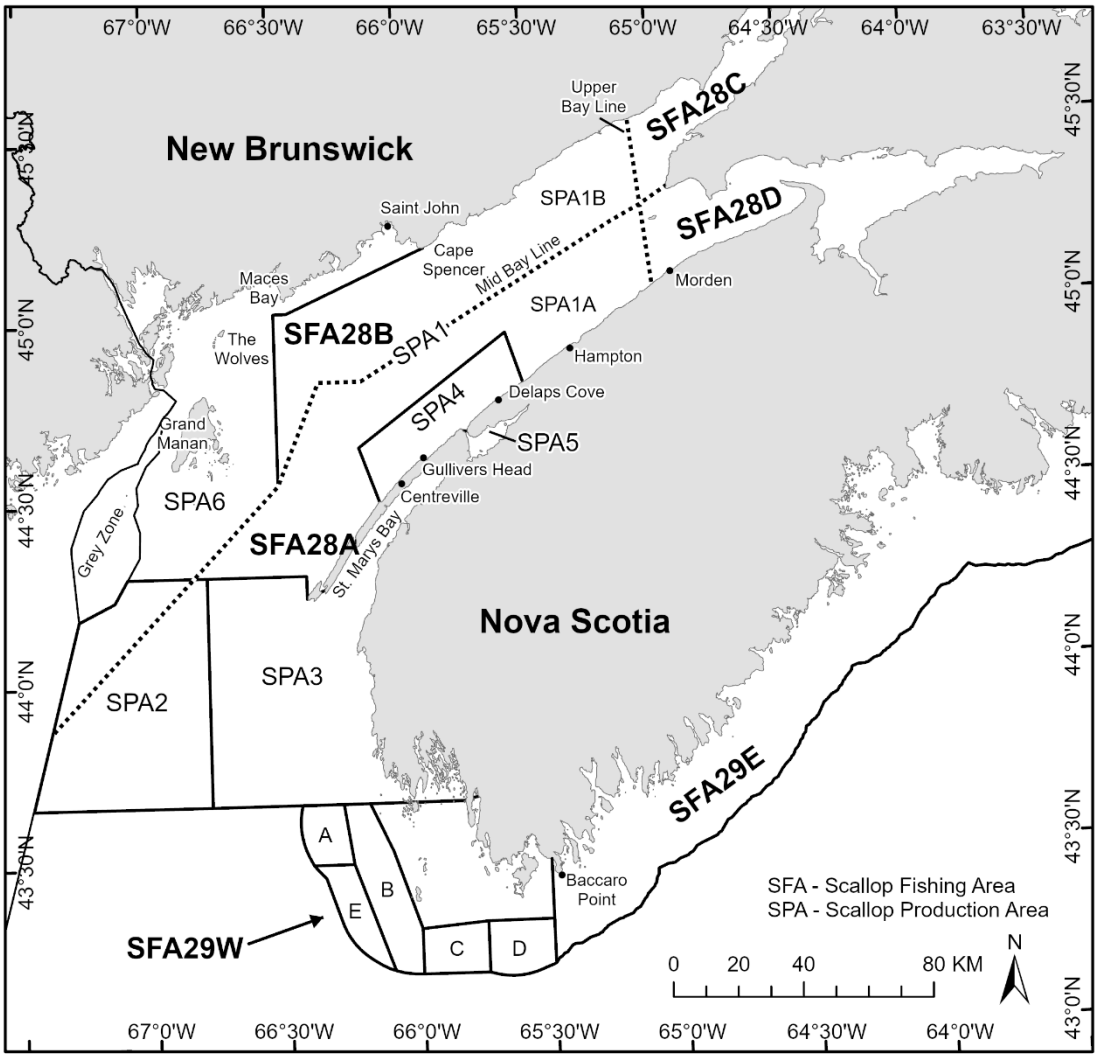

Figure A1. Map of Scallop Production Areas (SPAs) and Scallop Fishing Areas (SFAs) in the Bay of Fundy (BoF) and approaches. There are three commercial fleets (Full Bay, Mid Bay, and Upper Bay) in the inshore BoF Scallop fishery. Full Bay license holders are permitted to fish throughout the BoF. Mid Bay license holders have access to all areas north of the Mid Bay line. Upper Bay license holders are restricted to the upper reaches of the Bay.

Table A1. Commercial Scallop fishery landings, Total Allowable Catch (TAC), and landings for communal Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) purposes by First Nations (meats, t) for Scallop Production Areas (SPAs) in the Bay of Fundy from 2022 to 2024. TAC values are pre-quota reconciliation. Landing values in 2024 are preliminary (as of October 11, 2024). Dash (—) indicates no catch. Asterisk (*) indicates preliminary data.

Year	SPA	TAC (t)	Landings (t)	FSC (t)	Total Landings (t)
2022	1A	350	350.2	—	350.2
	1B	450	441.3	—	441.3
	3	200	201.1	—	201.1
	4&5	200	189.7	—	189.7
	6	265	283.9	—	283.9
2023	1A	375	390.9	—	390.9
	1B	550	545.8	—	545.8
	3	135	144.5	—	144.5
	4&5	190	195.4	—	195.4
	6	330	333.6	12.2	345.8
2024*	1A	500	505.7	—	505.7
	1B	700	735.7	3.5	739.2
	3	200	151.8	—	151.8
	4&5	275	271.0	—	271.0
	6	525	523.3	9.5	532.8

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