Final Report

An Assessment of Sea Scallop Abundance and Distribution in Selected Closed Areas: Nantucket Lightship Closed Area

Award Number: 09-SCA-08

Submitted to:

National Marine Fisheries Service
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
Cooperative Research Program
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VIMS Marine Resource Report No. 2010-5
May 28, 2010

Project Summary

As the spatial and temporal dynamics of marine ecosystems have recently become better understood, the concept of entirely closing or limiting activities in certain areas has gained support as a method to conserve and enhance marine resources. In the last decade, the sea scallop resource has benefited from measures that have closed specific areas to fishing effort. As a result of closures on both Georges Bank and in the mid-Atlantic region, biomass of scallops in those areas has expanded. As the time approaches for the fishery to harvest scallops from the closed areas, quality, timely and detailed stock assessment information is required for managers to make informed decisions about the re-opening.

During July 2009, a survey was conducted in the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area (NLCA) aboard a commercial sea scallop vessel. At pre-determined sampling stations within the exemption area of the NLCA both a NMFS survey dredge and a standard commercial dredge were simultaneously towed. From this trip, fine scale survey data was used to assess scallop abundance and distribution in the closed area. This data will also provide a comparison of the utility of using two different gears as survey tools in the context of industry based surveys. The results of this study will provide additional information in support of upcoming openings of closed areas within the context of rotational area management.

Project Background

The sea scallop, *Placopecten magellanicus,* supports a fishery that in the 2008 fishing year landed 53 million pounds of meats with an ex-vessel value of over US $370 (Pritchard, 2008). These landings resulted in the sea scallop fishery being an extremely valuable fishery along the East Coast of the United States. While historically subject to extreme cycles of productivity, the fishery has benefited from recent management measures intended to bring stability and sustainability. These measures include: limiting the number of participants, total effort (days-at-sea), gear and crew restrictions and most recently, a strategy to improve yield by protecting scallops through rotational area closures.

Amendment #10 to the Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan officially introduced the concept of area rotation to the fishery. This strategy seeks to increase the yield and reproductive potential of the sea scallop resource by identifying and protecting discrete areas of high densities of juvenile scallops from fishing mortality. By delaying capture, the rapid growth rate of scallops is exploited to realize substantial gains in yield over short time periods. In addition to the formal attempts found in Amendment #10 to manage discrete areas of scallops for improved yield, specific areas on Georges Bank are also subject to area closures. In 1994, 17,000 km^2 of bottom were closed to any fishing gears capable of capturing groundfish. This closure was an attempt to aid in the rebuilding of severely depleted species in the groundfish complex. Since scallop dredges are capable of capturing groundfish, scallopers were also excluded from these areas. Since 1999, however, limited access to the three closed areas on Georges Bank has been allowed to harvest the dense beds of scallops that have accumulated in the absence of fishing pressure.

In order to effectively regulate the fishery and carry out a robust rotational area management strategy, current and detailed information regarding the abundance and distribution of sea scallops is essential. Currently, abundance and distribution information gathered by surveys comes from a variety of sources. The annual NMFS sea scallop survey provides a comprehensive and synoptic view of the resource from Georges Bank to Virginia. In contrast to the NMFS survey that utilizes a dredge as the sampling gear, the resource is also surveyed optically. Researchers from the School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI) are able to enumerate sea scallop abundance and distribution from images taken by both a still camera and a towed camera system (Stokesbury, *et. al.,* 2004;

Stokesbury, 2002). Prior to the utilization of the optical surveys and in addition to the annual information supplied by the NMFS annual survey, commercial vessels were contracted to perform surveys. Dredge surveys of the scallop access areas have been successfully completed by the cooperative involvement of industry, academic and governmental partners. The additional information provided by these surveys was vital in the determination of appropriate Total Allowable Catches (TAC) in the subsequent re-openings of the closed areas. This type of survey, using commercial fishing vessels, provides an excellent opportunity to gather required information and also involve stakeholders in the management of the resource.

The passing of Amendment #10 has set into motion changes to the sea scallop fishery that are designed to ultimately improve yield and create stability. This stability is an expected result of a spatially explicit rotational area management strategy where areas of juvenile scallops are identified and protected from harvest until they reach an optimum size. Implicit to the institution of the new strategy, is the highlighted need for further information to both assess the efficacy of an area management strategy and provide that management program with current and comprehensive information. In addition to rotational management areas, access to the scallop biomass encompassed by the Georges Bank Closed Areas is vital to the continued prosperity of the fishery.

In addition to collecting data to assess the abundance and distribution of sea scallops in the NLCA, the operational characteristics of commercial scallop vessels allow for the simultaneous towing of two dredges. As in past surveys, we towed two dredges at each station. One dredge was a NMFS sea scallop survey dredge and the other was a regulated commercial dredge. This paired design allowed for the estimation of the size selective characteristics of a New Bedford style sea scallop dredge equipped with turtle excluder chains. Current information does not exist for this gear configuration and it will be beneficial to both the stock assessment for scallops in that it provides the size selectivity characteristics of the most recent gear configuration and will support the use of this gear configuration to sample closed areas prior to re-openings within the context of the current rotational area management strategy. In addition, selectivity analyses using the SELECT method provide insight to the relative efficiency of the two gears used in the study (Millar, 1992). The relative efficiency measure from this experiment can be used to refine existing absolute efficiency estimates for the New Bedford style scallop dredge.

One of the stated advantages of a dredge sea scallop survey is that one can access and sample the target species. One parameter routinely measured is the shell height:meat weight relationship. While this parameter is used to determine swept area biomass for the area surveyed at that time, it can also be used as an indicator of seasonal shifts in biomass due to the influence of spawning. For this reason, data on the shell height:meat weight relationship is routinely gathered by both the NMFS and VIMS scallop surveys. While this relationship may not be a direct indicator of animal health in and of itself, long term data sets may be useful in evaluating changing environmental conditions, food availability and density dependent interactions.

Many of the scallops in certain areas the NLCA are becoming old and are nearing the end of their expected life span. We have observed and hear numerous comments about the meat quality of these scallops mostly relative to their color and lack of integrity (stringy and subject to tearing when shucked). In fact, many of the scallop processors have developed a color scale to grade the grey and tan discoloration of these older scallops from NLCA and CAI in addition to downgrading the price for discolored and torn scallops. These adverse meat quality characteristics are directly related to age and may be an indicator of or precursor to natural mortality events.

For this study, we pursued multiple objectives. The primary objective was to collect information to characterize the abundance and distribution of sea scallops within the access area of NLCA. Utilizing the same catch data with a different analytical approach, we estimated the size selectivity characteristics of the commercial sea scallop dredge. In addition, an additional component of the selectivity analysis allows for supplementary information regarding the efficiency of the commercial dredge. As a third objective of this study, we collect biological samples to assess not only a time and area specific shell height:meat weight relationship, but complete an assessment of the product quality characteristics for scallops in the area.

Methods

Survey Area and Sampling Design

The NLCA was surveyed during the course of this project. The boundary coordinates of the surveyed areas can be found in Table 1. Sampling stations for this study were selected within the context of a systematic random grid. With the patchy distribution of sea scallops determined by some unknown combination of environmental gradients (i.e. latitude, depth, hydrographic features, etc.), a systematic selection of

survey stations results in an even dispersion of samples across the entire sampling domain. The systematic grid design was successfully implemented during industry-based surveys since 1998. This design has also been utilized for the execution of a trawl survey in the Bering Sea (Gunderson, 1993).

The methodology to generate the systematic random grid entailed the decomposition of the domain (in this case a closed area) into smaller sampling cells. The dimensions of the sampling cells were primarily determined by a sample size analysis conducted using the catch data from survey trips conducted in the same areas during prior years. Since closed areas are of different dimensions, the total number of stations sampled per survey varies. Therefore, the distance between the stations is not constant. Once the cell dimensions were set, a point within the most northwestern cell was randomly selected. This point served as the starting point and all of the other stations in the grid were based on its coordinates. The station locations for the 2009 NLCA survey are shown in Figure 1

Sampling Protocols

While at sea, the vessels simultaneously towed two dredges. A NMFS survey dredge, 8 feet in width equipped with 2-inch rings, 4-inch diamond twine top and a 1.5-inch diamond mesh liner was towed on one side of the vessel. On the other side of the vessel, a 15 foot commercial scallop dredge equipped with 4-inch rings, a 10-inch diamond mesh twine top and no liner was utilized. Position of twine top within the dredge bag was standardized throughout the study and rock chains were used in configurations as dictated by the area surveyed and current regulations. In this paired design, it is assumed that the dredges cover a similar area of substrate and sample from the same population of scallops. The dredges were switched to opposite sides of the vessel mid-way throughout the trip to help minimize any bias.

For each survey tow, the dredges were fished for 15 minutes with a towing speed of approximately 3.8-4.0 kts. High-resolution navigational logging equipment was used to accurately determine and record vessel position. A Star-Oddi™ DST sensor was used on the dredge to measure and record dredge tilt angle as well as depth (Figure 2). With these measurements, the start and end of each tow was estimated. Synchronous time stamps on both the navigational log and DST sensor were used to estimate the linear distance for each tow. A histogram depicting the estimated linear distances covered per tow over the entire survey is shown in Figure 3.

Sampling of the catch was performed using the protocols established by DuPaul and Kirkley, 1995 and DuPaul *et. al.* 1989. For each survey tow, the entire scallop catch was placed in baskets. Depending on the total volume of the catch, a fraction of these baskets were measured for sea scallop length frequency. The shell height of each scallop in the sampled fraction was measured on NMFS sea scallop measuring boards in 5 mm intervals. This protocol allows for the estimation of the size frequency for the entire catch by expanding the catch at each shell height by the fraction of total number of baskets sampled. Finfish and invertebrate bycatch were quantified, with finfish being sorted by species and measured to the nearest 1 cm.

Samples were taken to determine area specific shell height-meat weight relationships. At roughly 25 randomly selected stations the shell height of a sample of 10 scallops was measured to the nearest 0.1 mm. These scallops were then carefully shucked and the adductor muscle individually packaged and frozen at sea. Upon return, the adductor muscle was weighed to the nearest 0.1 gram. The relationship between shell height and meat weight was estimated using a generalized linear mixed model (gamma distribution, log link) incorporating depth as an explanatory variable in SAS v. 9.2. with the model:

$$\ln MW = \ln\alpha + \beta * \ln SH + \gamma * \ln Depth$$

where MW=meat weight (grams), SH=shell height (millimeters), Depth=depth (meters). α, β and γ are parameters to be estimated.

The standard data sheets used since the 1998 Georges Bank survey were used. The bridge log maintained by the captain/mate recorded location, time, tow-time (break-set/haul-back), tow speed, water depth, catch, bearing, weather and comments relative to the quality of the tow. The deck log maintained by the scientific personnel recorded detailed catch information on scallops, finfish, invertebrates and trash.

Data Analysis

The catch and navigation data were used to estimate swept area biomass within the areas surveyed. The methodology to estimate biomass is similar to that used in previous survey work by VIMS. In essence, we estimate a mean abundance from the point estimates and scale that value up to the entire area of the domain sampled. This calculation is given:

$$TotalBiomass = \sum_j \left(\frac{\left(\frac{CatchWtperTowinSubarea_j}{AreaSweptperTow} \right)}{Efficiency} \right) SubArea_j$$

Catch weight per tow of exploitable scallops was calculated from the raw catch data as an expanded size frequency distribution with an area and depth appropriate shell height-meat weight relationship applied (length-weight relationships were obtained from SARC 45 document as well as the actual relationship taken during the cruise) (NEFSC, 2007). Exploitable biomass, defined as that fraction of the population vulnerable to capture by the currently regulated commercial gear, was calculated using two approaches. The observed catch at length data from the NMFS survey dredge (assumed to be non size selective) was adjusted based upon the size selectivity characteristics of the commercial gear (Yochum and DuPaul, 2008). The observed catch-at-length data from the commercial dredge was not adjusted due to the fact that these data already represent that fraction of the population that is subject to exploitation by the currently regulated commercial gear.

Utilizing the information obtained from the high resolution GPS, an estimate of area swept per tow was calculated. Throughout the cruises the location of the ship was logged every three seconds. By determining the start and end of each tow based on the recorded times as determined by the tilt sensor data of, a survey tow can be represented by a series of consecutive coordinates (latitude, longitude). The linear distance of the tow is calculated by:

$$TowDist = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sqrt{\left(long_2 - long_1\right)^2 + \left(lat_2 - lat_1\right)^2}$$

The linear distance of the tow is multiplied by the width of the gear to result in an estimate of the area swept by the gear during a given survey tow.

The final two components of the estimation of biomass are constants and not determined from experimental data obtained on these cruises. Estimates of survey dredge gear efficiency have been calculated from a prior experiment using a comparison of optical and dredge catches (NEFSC, 2007). Based on this experiment, an efficiency

value of 36% was used for the survey dredge. Estimates of commercial sea scallop dredge gear efficiency have been calculated from prior experiments using a variety of approaches (Gedamke *et. al.,* 2005, Gedamke *et. al.,* 2004, D. Hart, pers. comm.). The efficiency of the commercial dredge is generally considered to be higher and based on the prior work as well as the suggestion from a later analysis in this study; efficiency values of both 45% as well as 50% were used. To scale the estimated mean scallop catch to the full domain, the total area of the NLCA was calculated in ArcView v. 3.3.

Size Selectivity

The estimation of size selectivity of the New Bedford style scallop dredge equipped with 4" rings, a 10" twine top and turtle chains was based on a comparative analysis of the catches from the two dredges used in the survey. For this analysis, the NMFS survey dredge is assumed to be non-selective (i.e. a scallop that enters the dredge is retained by the dredge). Catches at length from the selective gear (commercial dredge) are compared to the non-selective gear via the SELECT method (Millar, 1992) and the selective properties of the commercial dredge are estimated. In addition to estimates of the length based probabilities of capture by the commercial dredge, the SELECT method characterizes a measure of relative fishing intensity. Assuming a known quantity of efficiency for one of the two gears (in this case the survey dredge at 36%), insight into the efficiency of the other gear (commercial dredge) can be attained.

Prior to analysis, all comparative tows were evaluated. Any tows that were deemed to have had problems during deployment or at any point during the tow (flipped, hangs, crossed towing wires, etc.) were removed from the analysis. In addition, tows where zero scallops were captured by both dredges were also removed from the analysis. The remaining tow pairs were then used to analyze the size selective properties of the commercial with the SELECT method.

The SELECT method has become the preferred method to analyze size-selectivity studies encompassing a wide array of fishing gears and experimental designs (Millar and Fryer, 1999). This analytical approach conditions the catch of the selective gear at length *l* to the total catch (from both the selective gear variant and small mesh control).

$$\Phi_c(l) = \frac{p_c r_c(l)}{p_c r_c(l) + (1 - p_c)}$$

Where r(l) is the probability of a fish at length l being retained by the gear given contact and p is the split parameter, (measure of relative efficiency). Traditionally selectivity curves have been described by the logistic function. This functional form has symmetric tails. In certain cases, other functional forms have been utilized to describe size selectivity of fishing gears. Examples of different functional forms include Richards, log-log and complimentary log-log. Model selection is determined by an examination of model deviance (the likelihood ratio statistic for model goodness of fit) as well as Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) (Xu and Millar, 1993, Sala, *et. al.*, 2008). For towed gears, however, the logistic function is the most common functional form observed in towed fishing gears. Given the logistic function:

$$r(l) = \left(\frac{\exp(a + bl)}{1 + \exp(a + bl)} \right)$$

by substitution:

$$\Phi(L) = \frac{pr(L)}{(1-p) + pr(L)} = \frac{p\dfrac{e^{a+bL}}{1+e^{a+bL}}}{(1-p) + p\dfrac{e^{a+bL}}{1+e^{a+bL}}} = \frac{pe^{a+bL}}{(1-p) + e^{ea+bL}}$$

Where a, b, and p are parameters estimated via maximum likelihood. Based on the parameter estimates, L_{50} and the selection range (SR) are calculated.

$$L_{50} = \frac{-a}{b} \qquad\qquad SR = \frac{2 * \ln(3)}{b}$$

Where L_{50} defines the length at which an animal has a 50% probability of being retained by the gear given contact with the gear and SR represents the difference between L_{75} and L_{25} which is a measure of the slope of the ascending portion of the logistic curve.

In situations where catch at length data from multiple comparative tows is pooled to estimate an average selectivity curve for the experiment, tow by tow variation is often ignored. Millar *et al.* (2004) developed an analytical technique to address this between-haul variation and incorporate that error into the standard error of the parameter estimates. Due to the inherently variable environment that characterizes the operation of fishing gears, replicate tows typically show high levels of between-haul variation. This variation manifests itself with respect to estimated selectivity curves for a given gear configuration (Fryer 1991, Millar *et. al.*, 2004). If not accounted for, this between-haul variation may result in an underestimate of the uncertainty surrounding estimated parameters increasing the probability of spurious statistical significance (Millar *et. al.,* 2004).

Approaches developed by Fryer (1991) and Millar *et. al.,* (2004) address the issue of between-haul variability. One approach formally models the between-haul variability using a hierarchical mixed effects model (Fryer 1991). This approach quantifies the variability in the selectivity parameters for each haul estimated individually and may be more appropriate for complex experimental designs or experiments involving more than one gear. For more straightforward experimental designs, or studies that involve a single gear, a more intuitive combined-haul approach may be more appropriate.

This combined-hauls approach characterizes and then calculates an overdispersion correction for the selectivity curve estimated from the catch data summed over all tows, which is identical to a curve calculated simultaneously to all individual tows. Given this identity, a replication estimate of between-haul variation (REP) can be calculated and used to evaluate how well the expected catch using the selectivity curve calculated from the combined hauls fits the observed catches for each individual haul (Millar *et. al.* 2004).

REP is calculated as the Pearson chi-square statistic for model goodness of fit divided by the degrees of freedom.

$$REP = \frac{Q}{d}$$

Where Q is equal to the Pearson chi-square statistic for model goodness of fit and d is equal to the degrees of freedom. The degrees of freedom are calculated as the number

of terms in the summation, minus the number of estimated parameters. The calculated replicate estimate of between-haul variation was used to calculate observed levels of extra Poisson variation by multiplying the estimated standard errors by $\sqrt{REP}$.

A significant contribution of the SELECT model is the estimation of the split parameter which estimates the probability of an animal "choosing" one gear over another (Holst and Revill, 2009). This measure of relative efficiency, while not directly describing the size selectivity properties of the gear, is insightful relative to both the experimental design of the study as well as the characteristics of the gears used. A measure of relative efficiency (on the observational scale) can be calculated in instances where the sampling intensity is unequal. In this case, the sampling intensity is unequal due to differences in dredge width. Relative efficiency can be computed for each individual trip (Park *et. al.*, 2007).

$$RE = \frac{p/(1-p)}{p_0/(1-p_0)}$$

Where p is equal to the observed (estimated p value) and p_0 represents the expected value of the split parameter based upon the dredge widths in the study. For this study, either a 15 ft. commercial dredge was used with expected split parameters of 0.6522. The computed relative efficiency values were then used to scale the estimate of the NMFS survey dredge efficiency obtained from the optical comparisons (36%). Computing efficiency for the estimated p value from Yochum and DuPaul (2008) yields a commercial dredge efficiency of 64%. The dredge in this experiment did not have turtle chains and a portion of the cruises were conducted in the mid-Atlantic region where dredge efficiency is thought to be higher due to substrate and hydrographic conditions.

Product quality

At roughly 10 stations randomly selected within the NLCA, we gathered data on the relative quality of scallop meats during the survey using numerical values assigned to the scallop color scales used by industry. In addition, we determined the frequency of meat tearing during the shucking process using a standardized shucking procedure similar to the one used for obtaining scallop meats for the shell height:meat weight relationship. We then were able to quantitatively assess the prevalence and distribution

of sub-standard product quality. This information may be useful in determining an alternate harvesting strategy for the area.

Results

Abundance and distribution

The survey cruise to the NLCA was completed in July 2009. Summary statistics for the cruise is shown in Table 2. Length frequency distributions for the scallops captured during the NLCA survey is shown in Figure 4. Maps depicting the spatial distribution of the catches of pre-recruit (<90 mm shell height), and fully recruited (≥90mm shell height) scallops from both the commercial and survey dredges are shown in Figures 5-8. Mean total and mean exploitable scallop densities for both the survey and commercial dredge is shown in Table 3. This information expanded to the area of the entire NLCA and representing an estimate of the total number of animals in the area is shown in Table 4. The mean estimated scallop meat weight for both the commercial and survey dredges for both of the shell height:meat weight relationships used is shown in Table 5. Mean catch (in grams of scallop meat) for the two dredge configurations as well as the two shell height: meat weight relationships are shown in Table 6. Total and exploitable biomass for both shell height:meat weight relationships and levels of assumed gear efficiency are shown in Tables 7-8 (total biomass is not estimated due to the selective properties of the commercial gear). Shell height-meat weight relationships were generated for the area. The resulting parameters as well as the parameters from SARC 45 are shown in Table 9. A comparative plot of the two curves are shown in Figure 9 CPUE of finfish and invertebrate bycatch is shown in Table10.

Size selectivity

The catch data was evaluated by the SELECT method with a variety of functional forms (logistic, Richards, log-log) in an attempt to characterize the most appropriate model. Examination of residual patterns model deviance and AIC values indicated that for all cruises the logistic curve provided the best fit to the data. An additional model run was conducted to determine whether the hypotheses of equal fishing intensity (i.e. the two gears fished with equally) were supported. Output for model runs for the logistic function with the split parameter (p) both held fixed at the expected value based on gear width and with p being estimated is shown in Table 11. Visual examination of residuals and values of model deviance and AIC indicated that in all cases, the model with an

estimated split parameter provided the best fit to the data. Fitted curves and deviance residuals for the NLCA cruise is shown in Figure 10. Estimated parameters for the final model run with a correction to account for between haul variation is shown in Table 12. The estimated L_{50} value was 96.7 mm and the selection range was 27.2 mm. A final selectivity curve for this data set is shown in Figure 11.

The analysis that estimated the relative efficiency of the two gears based upon the expected and observed split parameter values resulted in an estimate relative efficiency value of 1.4318. Assuming the survey dredge operates with a 36% efficiency, the expected value for the efficiency of the commercial dredge was 51.5%. These results justify the inclusion of the 50% efficiency value in the previously calculated estimates of total and exploitable biomass.

Product quality

At 8 stations in the NLCA, a sample of 50 scallops greater than 140 mm SH were obtained and shucked by a member of the crew. The crew member was instructed to shuck as if on a commercial trip but to take extra care not to tear the scallop meat. After 50 scallops were shucked, the meats were examined to determine the integrity of the scallop meat. The term ”tear” was used for scallop meats that were deemed unusable and would most likely be discarded at sea or graded as a “piece” during processing. The percentage of scallop meats deemed unusable ranged from 8% to 36% with the highest percentage noted for scallops obtained from the eastern side of the NLCA boundary. This data is presented in Table 13. Observations were also made of the coloration of the scallop meats at these stations, but at every station no noticeable color variations were recorded. This could be due to the fact that the survey was conducted in July before scallop spawning as previous observations made post-spawning in October-November indicated large variations in scallop meat color with grey or tan a common observation.

As part of the outreach component of this project, a special data report detailing the spatial distribution of yellowtail flounder in the NLCA was compiled. The objective of this report was to inform the sea scallop industry about potential areas of high yellowtail concentrations in an effort to direct effort away from these areas. It was hoped that by distributing this information, effort could be focused on areas that contained high densities of scallops while minimizing yellowtail bycatch. This is one potential strategy to reduce the rate of yellowtail bycatch and allow the fishery to remain open for longer

before the TAC for yellowtail is exhausted. In addition, the same information was included in a joint report issued by SMAST and VIMS. The purpose of this product was twofold. The first objective was to again distribute the information to industry. The second objective was to attempt by SMAST to institute a real-time yellowtail bycatch reporting system. Both reports were distributed to industry and are included as an appendix to this final report.

The data from this survey was also examined by stock assessment scientists from NEFSC. In 2009, four separate surveys were conducted in the NLCA. This allowed for the comparative assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the various methods of surveying scallops. This report is to be included as an appendix in SARC-50 and should be available as such upon completion of the stock assessment review.

Discussion

Fine scale surveys of closed areas are an important endeavor. These surveys provide information about subsets of the resource that may not have been subject to intensive sampling by other efforts. Additionally, the timing of industry-based surveys can be tailored to give managers current information to guide important management decisions. This information can help time access to closed areas and help set Total Allowable Catches (TAC) for the re-opening. Finally, this type of survey is important in that it involves the stakeholders of the fishery in the management of the resource.

Our results suggest that for the NLCA sufficient biomass exists to support an opening in 2010. For an area that had been dominated by a few large size classes, there appears to have been some recruitment in the area and that the age distribution of the resource is broader relative to prior years. Of note is the presence of the year class at roughly 120 mm. These animals, which represented an important size class are in prime condition, with the ability of realize year over year increases in growth as well as the ability to produce large number of gametes. These animals should constitute a large portion of the current year landings with the reduced incidence of the product quality issues associated with older and larger animals.

The use of commercial scallop vessels in a project of this magnitude presents some interesting challenges. One such challenge is the use of the commercial gear. This gear is not designed to be a survey gear; it is designed to be efficient in a commercial setting. The design of this current experiment however provides insight into the utility of using a commercial gear as a survey tool. One advantage of the use of this gear is that

the catch from this dredge represent exploitable biomass and no further correction is needed. A disadvantage lies in the fact that there is very little ability of this gear to detect recruitment events. However, since this survey is designed to estimate exploitable biomass, this is not a critical issue.

The concurrent use of two different dredge configurations provides a means to not only test for agreement of results, but also simultaneously conduct size selectivity experiments. In this instance, our experiment provided information regarding a mandated modification to the commercial gear. While the expectation was that the mandated changes should not affect the size selectivity characteristics of the gear (i.e. L_{50} and SR) the possibility exists that the overall efficiency will be reduced by the addition of turtle chains. Our results were indeed very similar to those of Yochum and DuPaul (2008) with respect to L_{50} and SR. Our estimated p value was lower than what was reported in Yochum and DuPaul (2008), suggesting a reduction in relative efficiency as a result of the addition of turtle chains. These results are consistent with an offsetting increase in efficiency as a result of larger ring size, but the concomitant reduction in efficiency as a result of turtle chains. Given the major role that dredge efficiency plays in the estimates of biomass from dredge surveys, it is clear that this topic is of critical importance its refinement be a high priority.

Biomass estimates are sensitive to other assumptions made about the biological characteristics of the resource; specifically, the use of appropriate shell height-meat weight parameters. Parameters generated from data collected during the course of the study were appropriate for the area and time sampled. There is however, a large variation in this relationship as a result of many factors. Seasonal variation can result in some of the largest differences in shell height-meat weight values. Traditionally, when the sea scallop undergoes its annual spawning cycle the somatic tissue of the scallop is still recovering and is at some of their lowest levels relative to shell size (Serchuk and Smolowitz, 1989). While accurately representative for the month of the survey, biomass has the potential to be different relative to other times of the year. For comparative purposes, our results were also shown using the parameters from SARC 45 (NEFSC, 2007). These parameters reflect larger geographic regions (Georges Bank) and are collected during the summer months. This allowed a comparison of results that may be reflective of some of the variations in biomass due to the fluctuations in the relationship between shell height and adductor muscle weight. Area and time specific shell height-meat weight parameters are another topic that merits consideration.

The gametogenic cycle of the sea scallop (*Placopecten magellanicus*) is well studied. The gonads of sea scallops on Georges Bank undergo maturation in the late spring and early summer and begin to spawn in some location as early as mid-July and is complete by the end of September. In the mid-Atlantic, scallops undergo two maturation/spawning cycles; one in the spring and the other in early fall. The maturation process of the gonads is generally thought to be influenced by food availability while the spawning process is influenced by shifts in temperature. The appearance and size of the gonad can be useful indicators of the gametogenic process. The sexes in scallops are generally separate with the males exhibiting a white to creamy white color while the female gonad is pink to brick-red in fully mature gonads. Qualitative descriptions of the various stages of maturation is a common practice in determining the timing of the reproductive cycle and there have been several studies verifying qualitative descriptions with histological evidence. For the present report, we have used the following qualitative descriptors: early developing, late developing, mature, spawning, partially spend and spent. From a management perspective it is important to understand that the timing of the spawning cycle has a significant influence on the meat yield and meat quality of the scallops. Post spawning scallops generally begin to lose some of their meat yield as well as meat quality. This is due to the fact at energy stores in the meat are used in the spawning process and the meat loses some of its integrity. Another aspect of the maturation/spawning cycle of the scallops is that of meat coloration. Under certain circumstances, excess food (lipids and fatty acids) are stored in the meat which in the females, cause the meat to take on a pumpkin coloration. This coloration has been known to cause marketing difficulties as many consumers do not understand the nature of this condition.

Our analysis of the product quality parameters of the scallop resource in the NLCA provides an important first step in this potentially important phenomenon. Since the NLCA is managed within the context of the groundfish closed areas, the population in this area varies from that associated with a true rotational area. As a result, the population is comprised of large numbers of older large scallops. As these scallops age the potential increases for product quality issues to arise. In essence, if a percentage of these animals are not fit to be harvested and landed, then the effective biomass in the area is potentially lower than a survey estimate would suggest. A high percentage of tearing is an indication of poorer meat quality and for future management measures one could consider a harvesting period earlier in the year possibly starting in late May or

June 1. From a management perspective with efforts to maximize yield from an aging population of scallops, careful consideration should be given to altering seasonal harvesting periods.

The survey of the NLCA during the summer of 2009 provided a high-resolution view of the resource in this area. The NLCA is unique in that it plays varied roles in the spatial management of the sea scallop resource. While the data and subsequent analyses provide an additional source of information on which to base management decisions, it also highlights the need for further refinement of some of the components of industry based surveys. The use of industry based cooperative surveys provides an excellent mechanism to obtain the vital information to effectively regulate the sea scallop fishery in the context of an area management strategy.

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Table 1 Boundary coordinates of Nantucket Lightship Closed Area sampled during 2009.

Nantucket Lightship Closed Area (exemption area)	Latitude	Longitude
NLCA-1	40° 50’ N	69° 00’ W
NLCA -2	40° 30’ N	69° 00’ W
NLCA -3	40° 30 N	69° 14.5’ W
NLCA -4	40° 50’ N	69° 29.5’ W
NLCA -5	40° 50’ N	69° 00’ W

Table 2 Summary statistics for the survey cruise.

Area	Cruise dates	Number of stations included in biomass estimate (survey dredge)	Number of stations included in biomass estimate (comm. dredge)
Nantucket Lightship Closed Area (exemption area)	July 10-15, 2009	89	89

Table 3 Mean total and mean exploitable scallop densities observed during the July 2009 cooperative sea scallop surveys.

Gear	Efficiency	Average Total Density (scallops/m^2)	SE	Average Density of Exploitable Scallops (scallops/m^2)	SE
NLCA					
Commercial	45%			0.235	0.032
Commercial	50%			0.211	0.029
Survey	36%	0.275	0.038	0.201	0.028

Table 4 Estimated number of scallops in the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area (access area). The estimate is based upon the estimated density of scallops at two commercial dredge efficiencies (45% and 50%) as well as a single survey dredge efficiency (36%). The total area surveyed was estimated at 1,146.54 km^2. July 2009.

Gear	Efficiency	Estimated Total	Estimated Total Exploitable
NLCA			
Commercial	45%		269,480,021
Commercial	50%		242,532,019
Survey	36%	315,959,988	231,219,379

Table 5 Estimated average scallop meat weights for the access area of the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area. Estimated weights are for the total size distribution of animals as represented by the catch from the NMFS survey dredge as well as the mean weight of exploitable scallops in the area as represented by the catches from both the survey and commercial dredge.

Gear	SH:MW	Mean Meat Weight (g) Total scallops	Mean Meat Weight (g) Exploitable scallops
NLCA			
Commercial	SARC 45		39.75
Survey	SARC 45	33.81	41.30
Commercial	July, 2009		45.08
Survey	July, 2009	38.81	46.43

Table 6 Mean catch of sea scallops observed during the 2009 VIMS-Industry cooperative closed area survey of the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area. Mean catch is depicted as a function of various shell height meat weight relationships, either an area specific relationship derived from samples taken during the survey, or a relationship from SARC 45.

Gear	Samples	SH:MW	Mean (grams/tow)	Standard Error
NLCA				
Commercial	89	July,2009	39,106.96	5,153.33
Survey	89	July,2009	14,676.68	2,060.18
Commercial	89	SARC 45	34,459.54	4,605.20
Survey	89	SARC 45	13.044.54	1,869.92

Table 7 Estimated total biomass of sea scallops observed during the July 2009 VIMS-Industry cooperative closed area survey of the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area. Biomass is presented as a function of two different shell height meat weight relationships, either an area specific relationship derived from samples taken during the actual survey or a regional relationship from SARC 45.

Gear	SH:MW	Efficiency	Total Biomass (mt)	95% CI	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95%CI
NLCA						
Survey	SARC 45	36%	10,752.2	1,885.4	8,897.3	12,544.4
Survey	July, 2009	36%	12,343.5	2,014.3	10,329.2	14,357.9

Table 8 Estimated exploitable biomass of sea scallops observed during the 2009 VIMS-Industry cooperative closed area surveys. Biomass is depicted as a function of various shell height-meat weight relationships, either an area specific relationship derived from samples taken during the survey, a relationship from SARC 45, or a regional relationship generated by the NEFSC.

Gear	SH:MW	Efficiency	Exploitable Biomass (mt)	95% CI	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95%CI
GBCAII						
Commercial	July, 2009	45%	12,230.3	2,109.8	10,120.4	14,340.0
Commercial	July, 2009	50%	11,017.8	2,003.5	9,014.3	13,021.3
Survey	July, 2009	36%	10,802.1	1,773.6	9,028.5	12,575.6
Commercial	SARC 45	45%	10,782.6	1,885.4	8,897.2	12,668.0
Commercial	SARC 45	50%	9,704.4	1,788.6	7,915.7	11,493.1
Survey	SARC 45	36%	9,607.8	1,609.2	7,988.6	11,217.0

Table 9 Summary of area specific shell height-meat weight parameters used in the analyses. Parameters were obtained from two sources: (1) samples collected during the course of the surveys (July of 2009), and (2) SARC 45 (NEFSC, 2007)*.

Area surveyed	Date	α	β	γ
Survey data				
NLCA	July, 2009	-7.3882	2.3591	-0.0746
SARC 45				
Georges Bank	-	-8.62	2.95	-0.51

*The length weight relationship for sea scallops from data collected on the cruise and SARC 45 is modeled as:

$$W=\exp(\alpha+ \beta\ln(L) + \gamma\ln (D))$$

Where W is meat weight in grams, L is scallop shell height in millimeters (measured from the umbo to the ventral margin) and D is depth in meters.

Table 10 Catch per unit effort (a unit of effort is represented by one standard survey tow of 15 minute duration at 3.8 kts.) of finfish and invertebrate bycatch encountered during the survey of the exemption area in Nantucket Lightship Closed Area during July 2009. In total, finfish and invertebrate bycatch was measured and recorded for 91 survey tows.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Commercial Dredge	Survey Dredge
Unclassified Skates	Raja spp.	37.51	16.15
Barndoor Skate	Raja laevis	0.81	0.38
Hering Uncl.	Cluepa spp.	0.00	0.20
Silver Hake	Merluccius bilinearis	0.29	4.66
Atlantic Cod	Gadus morhua	0.00	0.01
Haddock	Melanogrammus aeglefinus	0.01	0.01
Red Hake	Urophycis shuss	0.00	0.12
Spotted Hake	Urophycis regia	0.69	19.25
American Plaice	Hippoglossoides platessoides	0.69	1.36
Summer Flounder	Paralichtys dentatus	0.15	0.74
Fourspot Flounder	Paralichtys oblongotus	0.36	1.87
Yellowtail Flounder	Limanda ferruginea	2.07	2.99
Blackback Flounder	Psuedopleuronectes americana	0.96	1.09
Witch Flounder	Glyptocephalus cynoglossus	0.00	0.04
Windowpane Flounder	Scophthalmus aquasus	0.49	0.71
Sculpin Uncl.	Cottidae spp.	0.00	0.03
Fawn Cusk Eel	Lepophidium profundorum	0.00	0.25
Monkfish	Lophius americanus	1.56	0.69

Table 11 Selection curve parameter estimates and hypotheses tests for all cruises. Selectivity data for each cruise was evaluated by a logistic curve with and without the split parameter (p) estimated. Improvements with respect to model fit were assessed by an examination of model deviance and AIC values.

	NLCA	
	Fixed p	**Estimated p**
a	-8.7353	-7.8091
b	0.0118	0.0806
p	.6522	.7286
L_{25}	75.04	83.23
L_{50}	85.82	96.86
L_{75}	96.64	110.49
Selection Range (SR)	21.53	27.25
Model Deviance	31.12	10.62
Degrees of Freedom	30	30
AIC	151.43	130.93

Table 12 Estimated logistic SELECT model fit for tows with total catch of greater than 50 scallops . Estimated parameters a, b and p as well as the length at 50% retention (L_{50}), Selection Range(SR) and Selection Factor (SF) are shown. The number of valid tows, as well as the replication estimate of between-haul variation (REP) is shown. Standard error estimates have been multiplied by square root of the REP estimate to reflect the observed levels of between-haul variation

	NLCA	
Length Classes	32.5-177.5	
a	-7.813	
b	0.080	
p	0.7283	0.0145
L_{50}	96.789	3.949
Selection Range	27.219	3.679
REP	5.55	
# of tows in analysis	78	

Table 13 Results from the experiment that examined the percentage of torn meats per 50 scallop sample. Animals were shucked by a crew member and subsequently evaluated as to whether the resulting scallop meat was acceptable to enter the market.

NLCA Station Number	Meat Count	% Meat Tear
NL-14	9.9	8
NL-30	7.6	8
NL-38	7.0	26
NL-40	9.7	16
NL-49	9.9	8
NL-57	7.4	36
NL-61	7.0	18
NL-76	7.7	8

Figure 1 Locations of sampling stations in the exemption area of Nantucket Lightship Closed Area surveyed by the F/V *Celtic* during the cruise conducted during July, 2009.

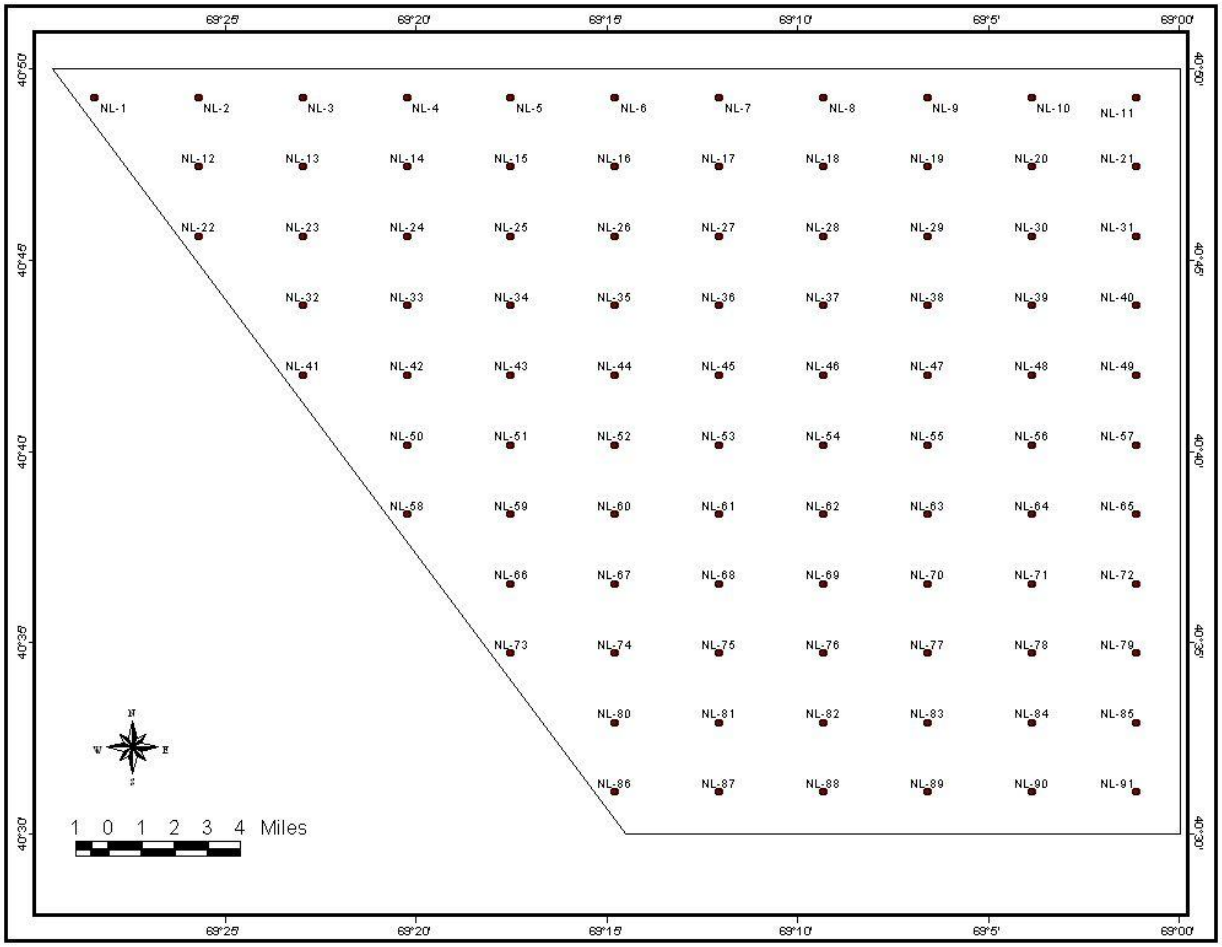


Figure 2 An example of the output Star-Oddi™ DST sensor. Arrows indicate the interpretation of the start and end of the dredge tow

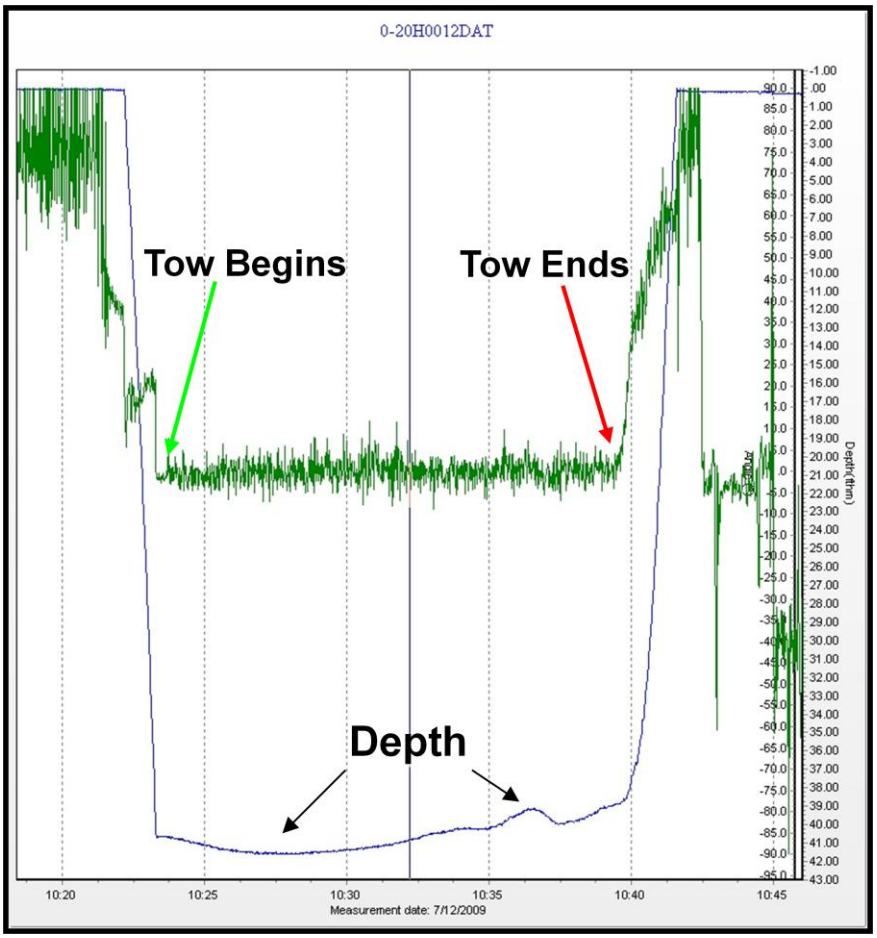


Figure 3 Histogram of calculated tow lengths from the 2009 survey of the NLCA. Mean tow length was 1829.9m with a standard deviation of 50.3m.

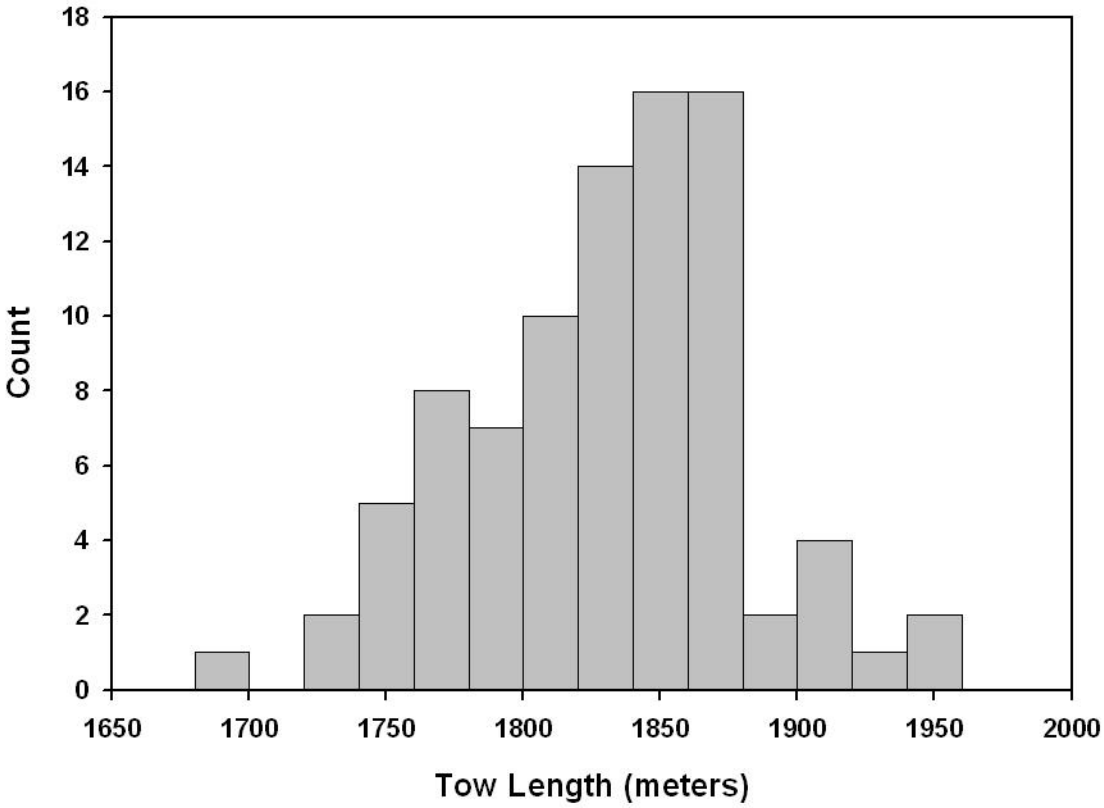


Figure 4 Shell height frequencies for the two dredge configurations used to survey the exemption area of the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area during July, 2009. The frequencies represent the expanded but unadjusted catches of the two gears for all sampled tows.

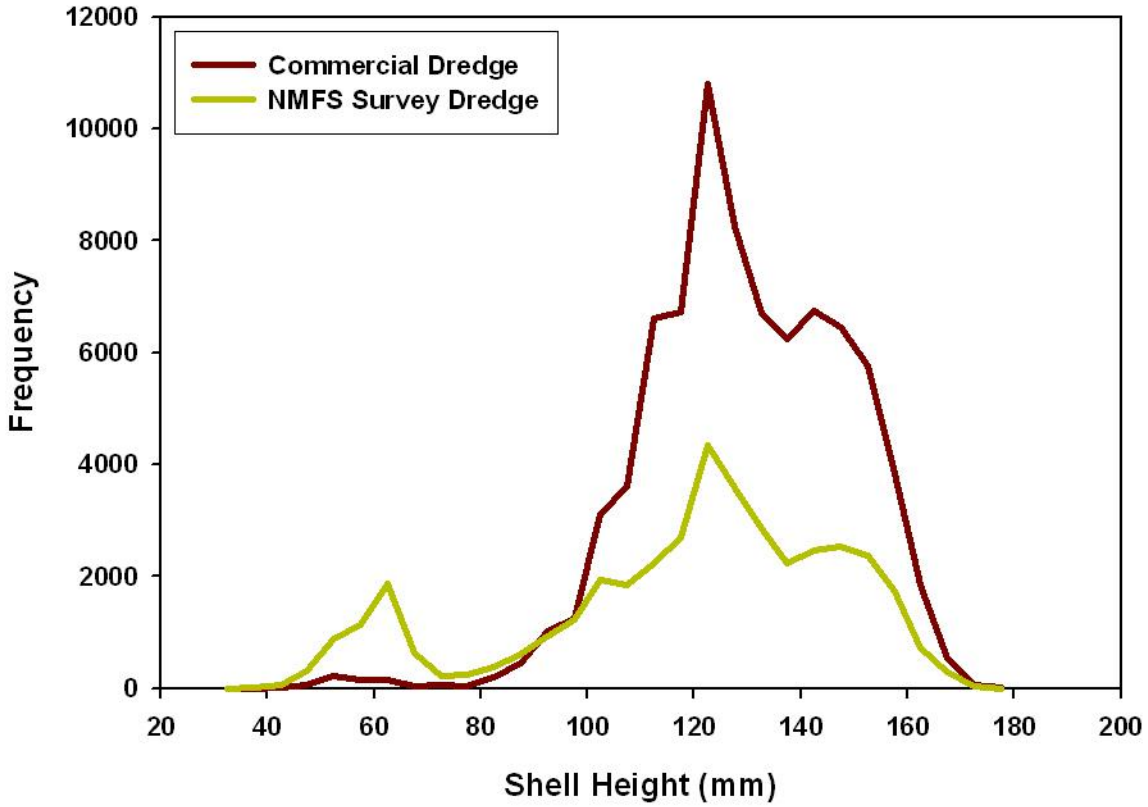


Figure 5 Spatial distribution of sea scallop catches on survey cruise to Nantucket Lightship Closed Area during July, 2009 by the commercial dredge. This figure represents the catch of pre-recruit sea scallops (<90mm).

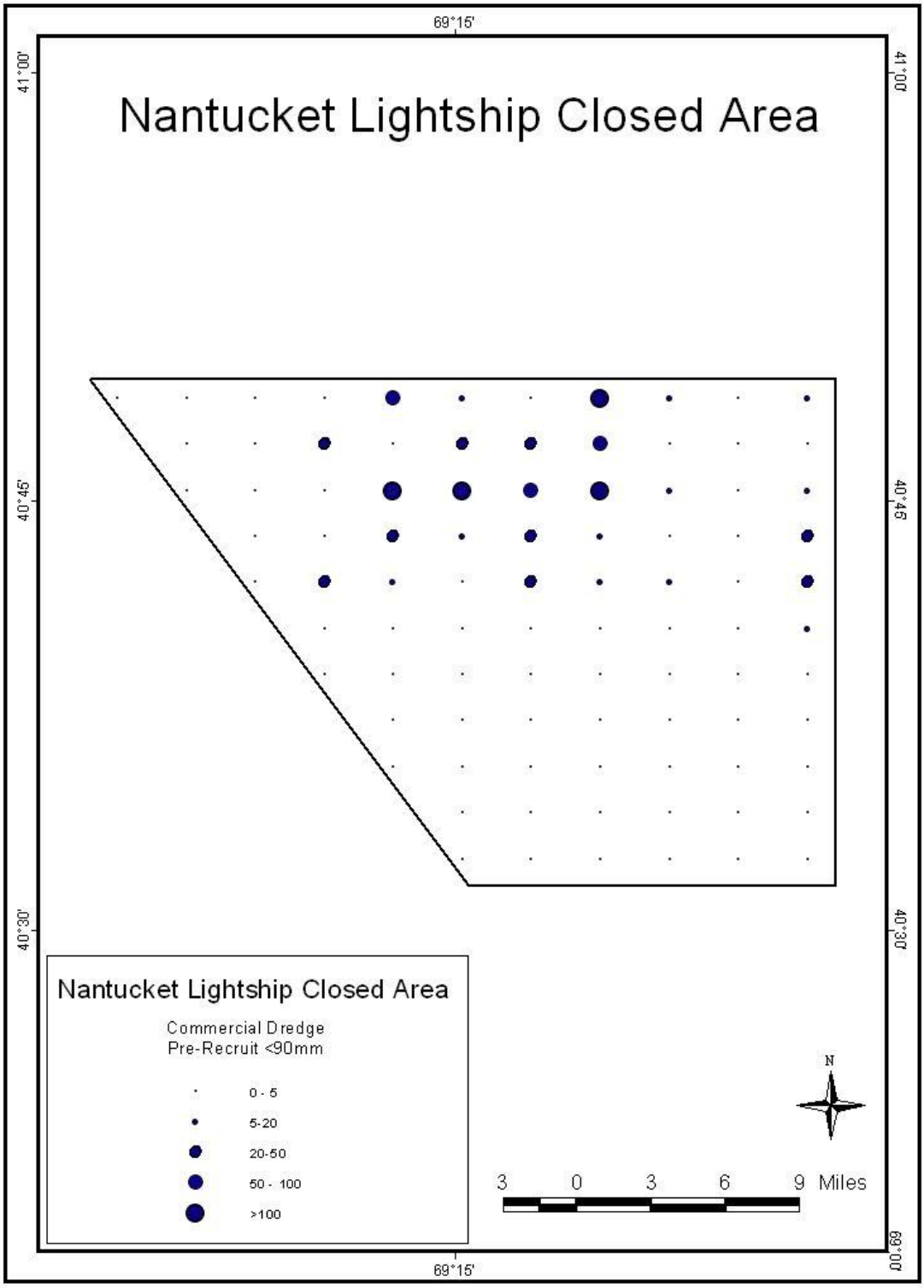


Figure 6 Spatial distribution of sea scallop catches on survey cruise to Nantucket Lightship Closed Area during July, 2008 by the commercial dredge. This figure represents the catch of fully recruited sea scallops (>90mm).

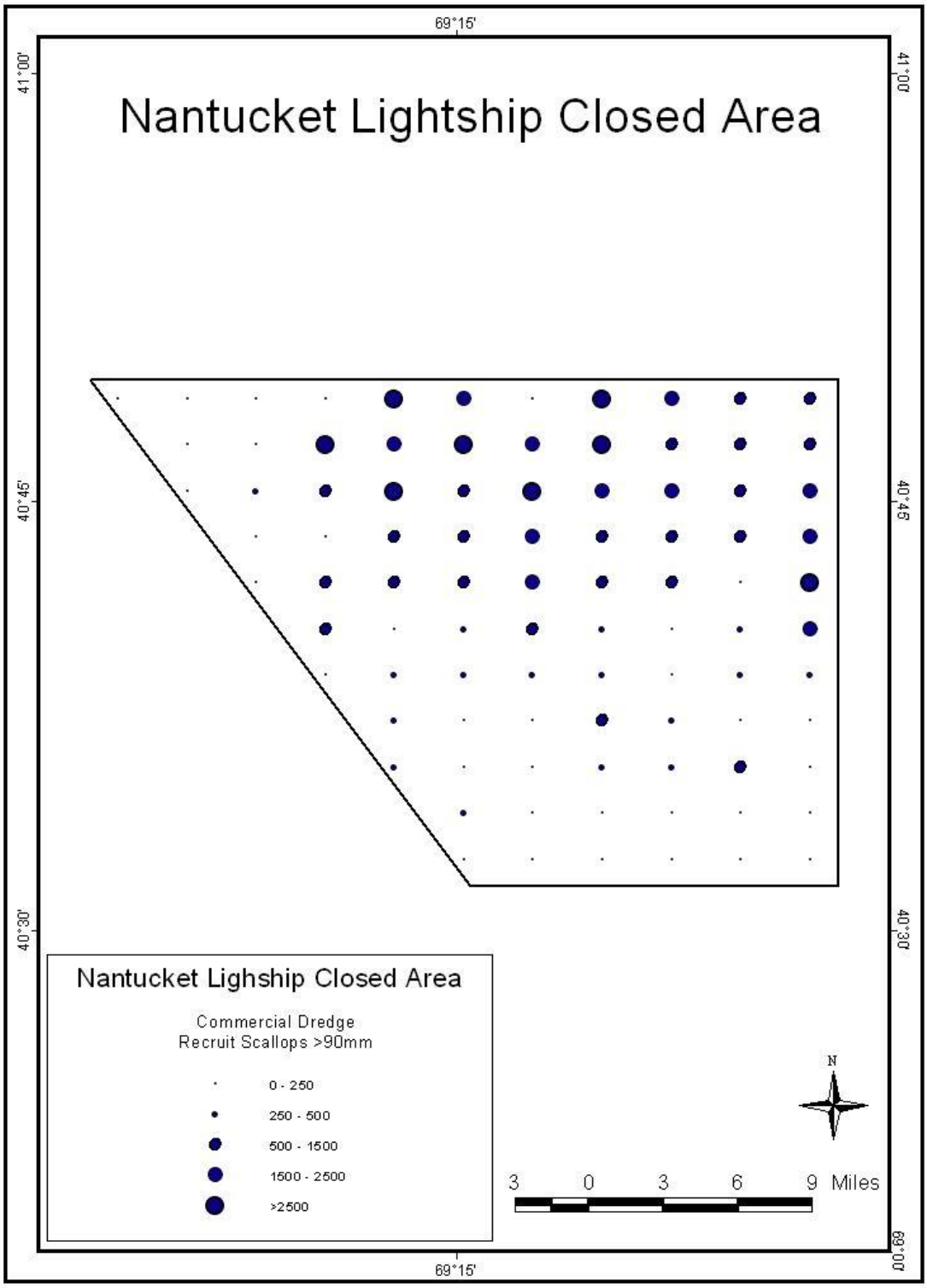


Figure 7 Spatial distribution of sea scallop catches on survey cruise to Nantucket Lightship Closed Area during July, 2009 by the NMFS survey dredge. This figure represents the catch of pre-recruit sea scallops (<90mm).

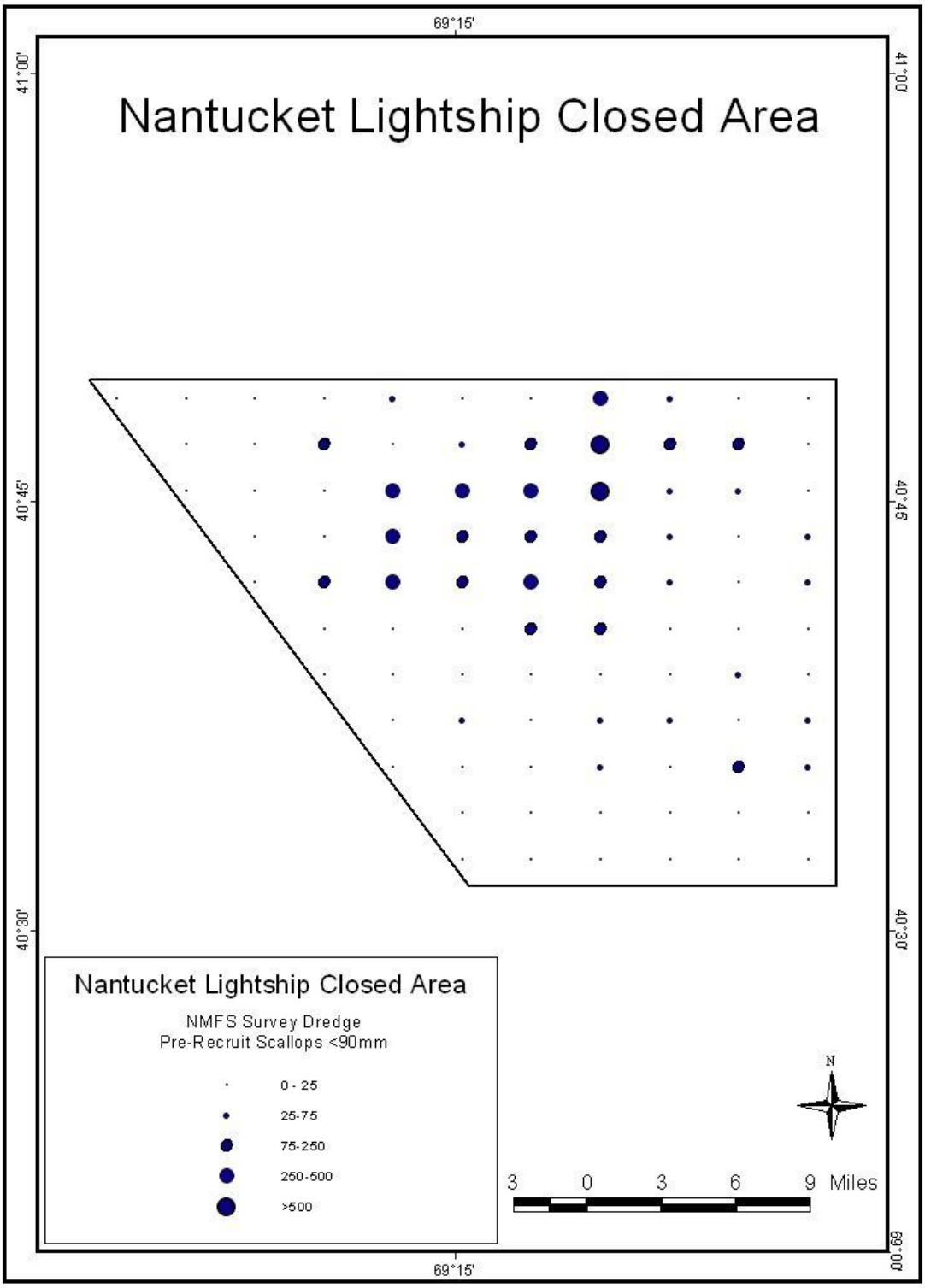


Figure 8 Spatial distribution of sea scallop catches on survey cruise to Nantucket Lightship Closed Area during July, 2009 by the NMFS survey dredge. This figure represents the catch of fully recruited sea scallops (>90mm).

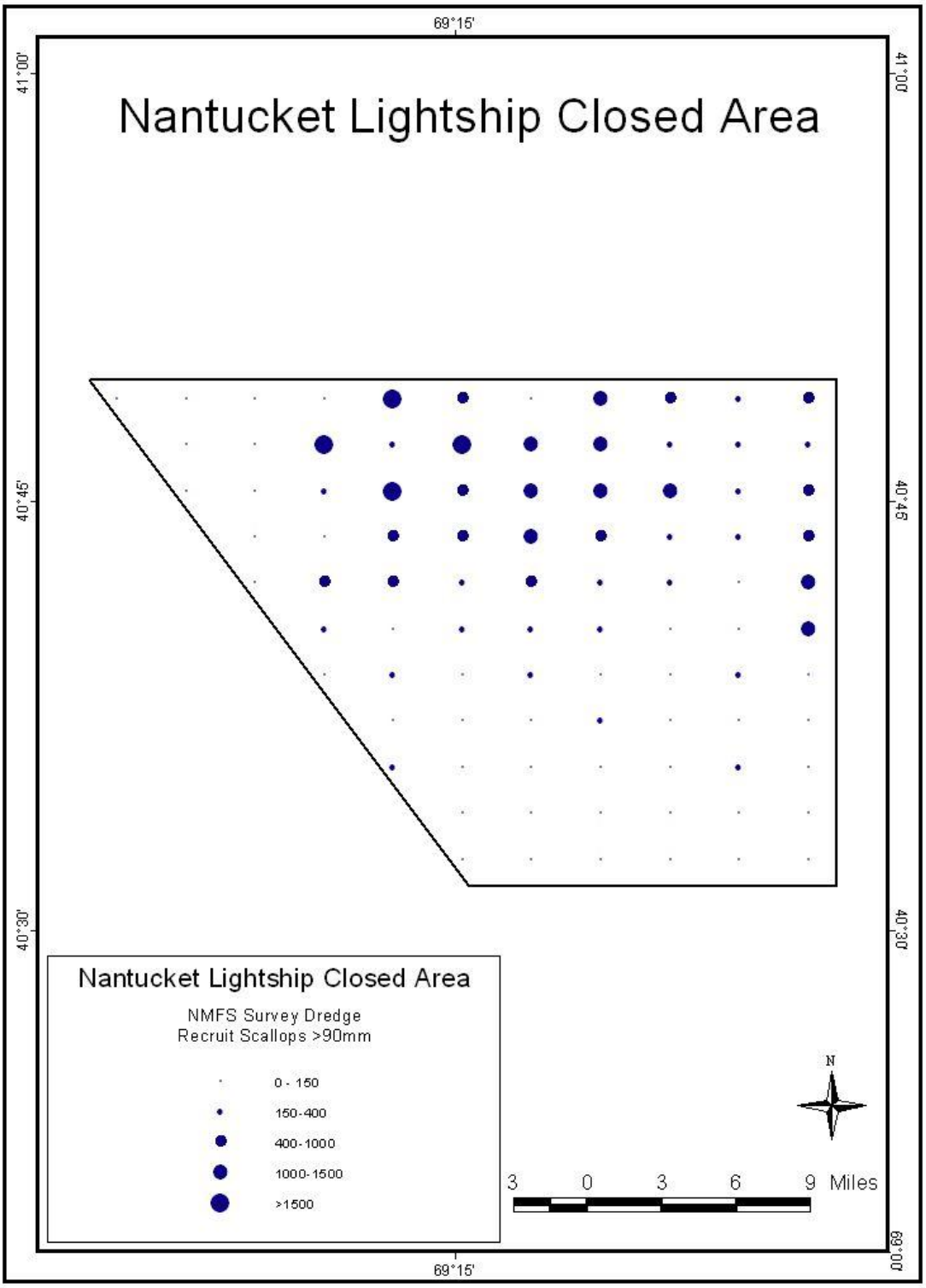


Figure 9 Shell height:meat weight relationships used in the study. The SARC-45 curve is an area specific curve for the entire Georges Bank area. The VIMS-2009 curve is based on samples taken during the survey and is specific for the NLCA during July 2009.

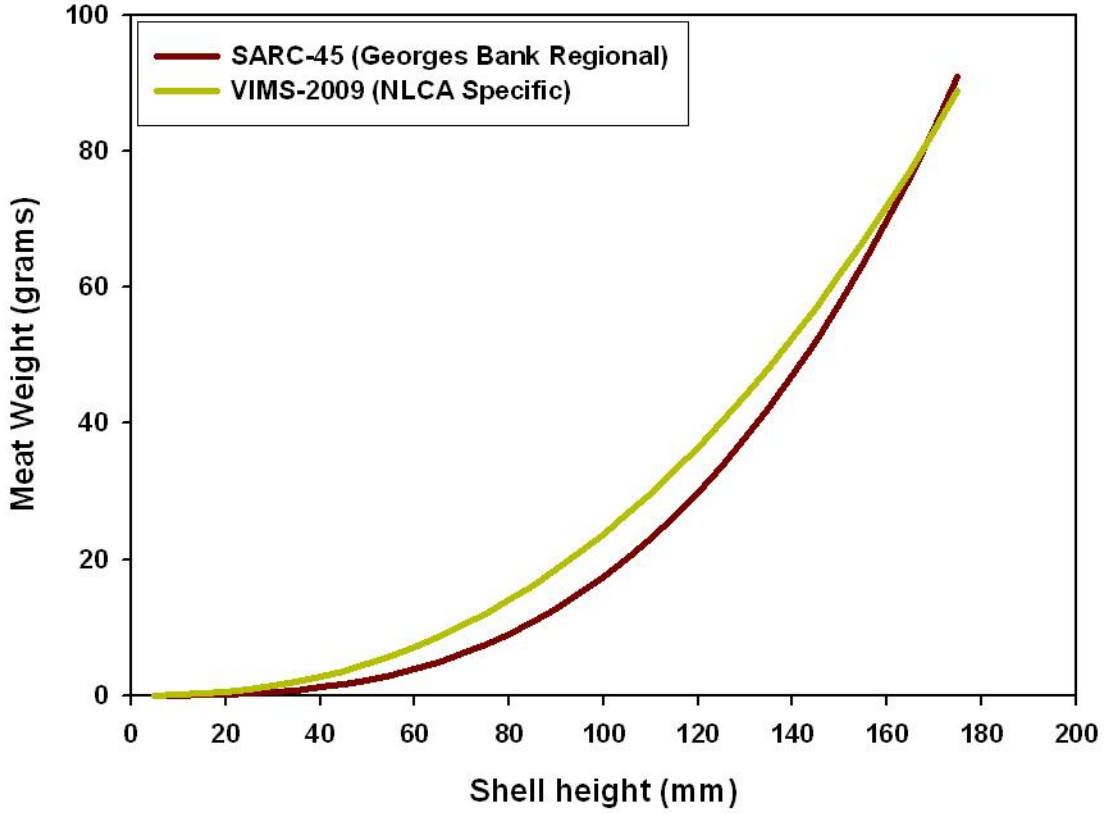
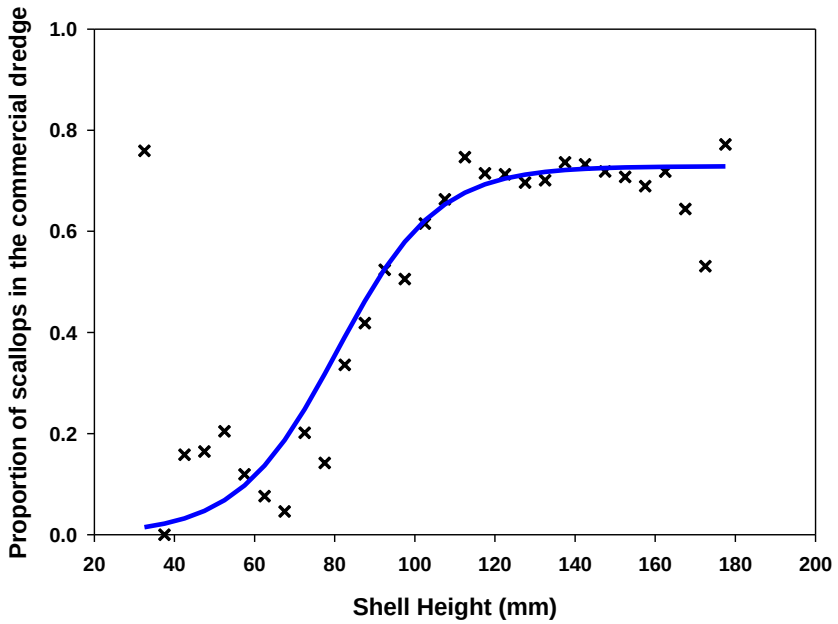


Figure 10 Top Panel: Logistic SELECT curves fit to the proportion of the total catch in the commercial dredge relative to the total catch (survey and commercial) for 2009 cruise to the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area. Bottom Panel: Deviance residuals for the model fit.



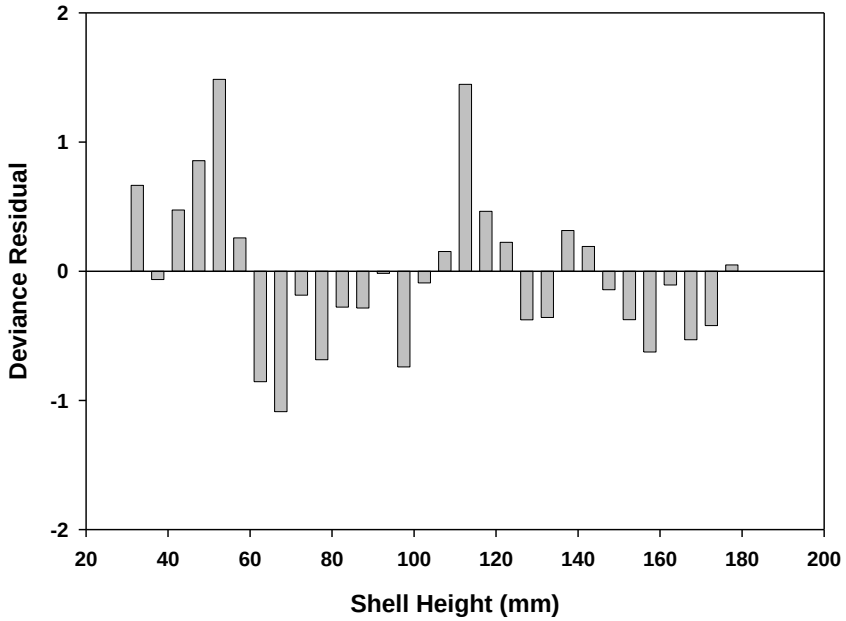
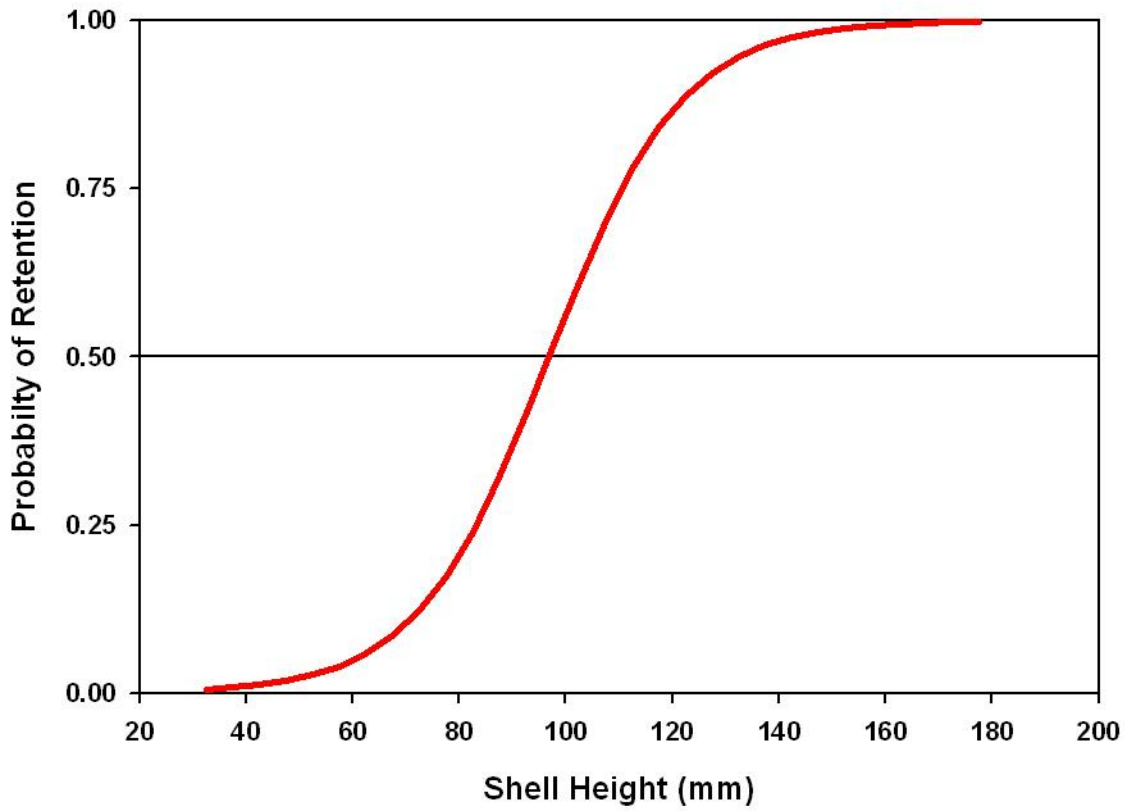



Figure 11 Estimated selectivity curve for the New Bedford style sea scallop dredge based on data from the 2009 survey of the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area.