



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

August 29, 2006

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SCALLOP VESSEL OWNERS AND OPERATORS

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) has established a new policy for closing Atlantic Sea Scallop Access Areas (Access Areas) upon completion of allocated general category trips and harvest of the applicable yellowtail flounder bycatch total allowable catch (yellowtail TAC).

This year, NOAA Fisheries Service closed the Access Area in the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area (NLCA) but allowed vessels to complete a trip as long as the trip was in progress prior to the effective date of the closure. This closure policy resulted in a number of vessels initiating trips after the closure announcement but prior to the effective closure date and time. Consequently, the general category fleet exceeded its trip allocation, and the scallop fleet caught more yellowtail flounder than was allocated. In addition, the scallop industry expressed concern that allowing vessels to start trips after the closure notice had safety implications because vessel operators initiated trips despite hazardous fishing conditions. To prevent these situations from recurring, the following policy will be implemented for future Access Area closures:

No scallop vessel may be inside the boundaries of an Access Area, other than for transiting only, after the effective date and time of the closure of the affected Access Area. A vessel transiting a closed area must have all fishing gear stowed and unavailable for immediate use.


Please note that NOAA Fisheries Service may not be able to make such announcements through the vessel monitoring system E-mail messaging functions. NOAA Fisheries Service will continue to make such announcements via the NOAA Weather radio, the U.S. Coast Guard radio when possible, and through a letter to permit holders (also available on the Northeast Region's website: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov>).

NOAA Fisheries Service will continue to provide complete and up-to-date information on the status of applicable yellowtail TACs and the general category trip allocations by posting information on its Fishery Statistics web page found at:

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/scal.htm>

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please call the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978)281-9315.

Sincerely,

for 
Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator





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Dear Limited Access Scallop Vessel Owner:

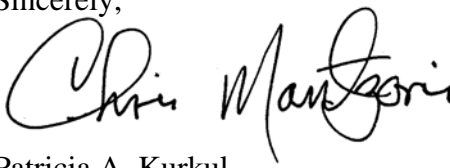
On July 20, 2006, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) closed the Scallop Access Area within the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area (NLCA) due to the harvest of the yellowtail flounder bycatch total allowable catch (TAC) allocated to the scallop fishery in the NLCA. Vessel owners were notified at the time of the closure that any unutilized trips or compensation trips would be converted to open area days-at-sea (DAS) for the 2006 fishing year at a reduced DAS rate (See July 18, 2006, closure letter for details). NOAA Fisheries Service announced that vessel owners would be notified within 15 days of the NLCA closure of the adjusted open area DAS allocations for their vessel(s).

NOAA Fisheries Service continues to audit the NLCA trip information and expects to notify individual vessel owners of their vessels' adjusted open area DAS allocations shortly.

Part-time and occasional scallop vessel owners should note that only those part-time or occasional vessels that broke an NLCA trip in 2006 and did not take their compensation trip prior to the NLCA closure will be allocated additional open area DAS for the 2006 fishing year. Otherwise, a part-time or occasional vessel can take its remaining trip(s) in the Closed Area II Access Area.

If you have any questions, please contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315.

Sincerely,


for Patricia A. Kurkul

Regional Administrator

As a result of a recent scallop vessel's catch of discarded military munitions, also enclosed with this letter for your information is a guide on how to identify and react to discarded military munitions encountered while fishing. This guide was prepared by the Defense Ammunition Center U.S. Army Technical Center for Explosives Safety in part due to recent interactions between unexploded ordnance (UXO) and the shellfishing industry in the Mid-Atlantic region. For more information regarding UXO please visit <http://www.denix.osd.mil/uxosafety>.





WARNING! DON'T FORGET

- Munitions are dangerous, and may not be easily recognizable!
- Limit handling to reduce risk of an explosion!
- Never bring a munition into port!



REMEMBER THE 3Rs

RECOGNIZE! Recognize when you may have found a munition.
RETREAT! If you find a munition, limit handling and carefully put it back in the sea.

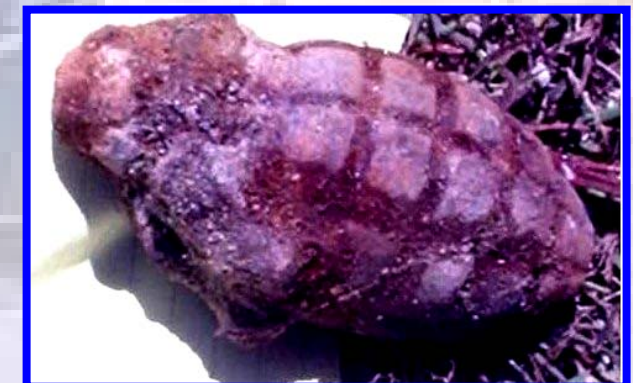
REPORT!

- Record the GPS coordinates where the munition was returned to the sea.
- Immediately notify the USCG of the coordinates and describe the munition.



EMERGENCY CONTACTS:

- At sea: Use Channel 16 (156.800MHz)
(or call 800-424-8802)
- On shore: Call 911 (Local law enforcement)



See www.denix.osd.mil/UXOSafety