

1 Atlantic surfclam Assessment

1.1 Foreword

The Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) process has three parts: preparation of stock assessments by the SAW Working Groups and/or by ASMFC Technical Committees/Assessment Committees; peer review of the assessments by a panel of outside experts who judge the adequacy of the assessment as a basis for providing scientific advice to managers; and a presentation of the results and reports to the Region's fishery management bodies.

Starting with SAW 39 (June 2004), the process was revised in two fundamental ways. First, the Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) became a smaller panel with panelists provided by the Independent System for Peer Review (Center of Independent Experts, (CIE). Second, the SARC provides little management advice. Instead, Council and Commission teams (e.g., Plan Development Teams, Monitoring and Technical Committees, Science and Statistical Committee) formulate management advice after an assessment has been accepted by the SARC. Starting with SAW 45 (June 2007) the SARC chairs were from external agencies, but not from the CIE. Starting with SAW 48 (June 2009), SARC chairs are from the Fishery Management Council's Science and Statistical Committee (SSC), and not from the CIE. Also at this time, some assessment Terms of Reference were revised to provide additional science support to the SSCs, as the SSC's are required to make annual ABC recommendations to the fishery management councils.

Reports that are produced following SAW/SARC meetings include: An *Assessment Summary Report* - a summary of the assessment results in a format useful to managers; an *Assessment Report* - a detailed account of the assessments for each stock; and the SARC panelist reports - a summary of the reviewer's

opinions and recommendations as well as individual reports from each panelist. Both the SAW/SARC assessment reports and the CIE review reports are available online at <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/reports.html>.

The 61st SARC was convened in Woods Hole at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), July 19-21, 2016 to review a benchmark stock assessment of Atlantic surfclam (*Spissula solidissima*). CIE reviews for SARC61 were based on detailed reports produced by NEFSC Assessment Working Groups. This introduction contains a brief summary of the SARC comments, a list of SARC panelists, the meeting agenda, and a list of attendees (Tables 1 - 3). Maps of the Atlantic coast of the USA and Canada are also provided (Figures 1 - 5).

Outcome of Stock Assessment Review Meeting:

Text in this section is based on SARC-61 Review Panel reports (available at <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/> under the heading "SAW 61 Panelist Reports").

The Atlantic surfclam stock assessment was accepted by the SARC-61 panel. In 2015 overfishing was not occurring and the stock was not overfished. Population projections suggest that the population is unlikely to become overfished and that overfishing is unlikely to occur by 2025. Nine of the ten assessment Terms of Reference were met. The assessment was based on the Stock Synthesis III model (SS3). Commercial LPUE values show mostly declining trends, appearing to contradict increasing survey trends. Stock depletion may be real at a local level, but the limited coverage of the fishery suggests that the LPUE trends are not indicative of the stock as a whole.

The Panel endorsed the redefinition of the Biological Reference Points (BRP) based on relative stock status. The new BRPs can be used to provide catch limit advice. The Panel noted that the fishing mortality threshold calculation uses an estimate of FMSY. This value was derived from a simulation study, the details of which were not discussed by the Panel at the review meeting. The assessment did not determine whether the surfclam resource should be considered as one

unit stock throughout the species' range in US federal waters or if regional stocks should be recognized. However, not meeting this ToR did not impact the overall acceptability of the assessment.

Due to the importance of the clam survey in this assessment, the Panel recommends caution in making any changes to the gear and survey vessel.

Table 1: 61st Stock Assessment Review Committee Panel.

SARC Chairman (MAFMC SSC):

Dr. Michael Wilberg
University of Maryland
Email: wilberg@umces.edu

SARC Panelists (CIE):

Dr. Coby Needle
Sea Fisheries Programme Manager
Marine Scotland - Science, Marine Laboratory
Aberdeen, UK
Email: C.Needle@MARLAB.AC.UK

Dr. Michael Bell
Research Associate
International Centre for Island Technology, Heriot-Watt University
Orkney, UK
Email: M.C.Bell@hw.ac.uk

Dr. Martin Cryer
Science Manager, Aquatic Environment
Ministry for Primary Industries
Wellington, NZ
Email: martin.cryer@mpi.govt.nz

Table 2: Agenda, 61st Stock Assessment Review Committee Meeting.

July 19-21, 2016

Stephen H. Clark Conference Room Northeast Fisheries Science Center
Woods Hole, Massachusetts

AGENDA¹ (version: 7/7/2016)

TIME	TOPIC	PRESENTER(S)	RAPPORTEUR
<u>Tuesday, July 19</u>			
10 10:30 AM	Welcome	James Weinberg, SAW Chair Michael Wilberg, SARC Chair	
	Introduction		
	Agenda Conduct of Meeting		
10:30 12:30 PM	Assessment Presentation (A. Surfclam)	Dan Hennen	Michele Traver
12:30 1:30 PM	Lunch		
1:30 3:30 PM	Assessment Presentation (A. Surfclam)	Dan Hennen	Michele Traver
3:30 3:45 PM	Break		
3:45 5:45 PM	SARC Discussion w/ Presenters (A. Surfclam)	Michael Wilberg, SARC Chair	Michele Traver
5:45 6 PM	Public Comments		
7 PM	(Social Gathering)		

Table 2 cont.

TIME	TOPIC	PRESENTER(S)	RAPPORTEUR
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Wednesday, July 20

9:00 - 10:45	Revisit with Presenters (A. Surfclam)	Michael Wilberg, SARC Chair	Toni Chute
10:45 - 11	Break		
11 - 11:45	Revisit with Presenters (A. Surfclam)	Michael Wilberg, SARC Chair	Toni Chute
11:45 - Noon	Public Comments		
12 - 1:15 PM	Lunch		
1:15 - 4 PM	Review/Edit Assessment Summary Report (A. Surfclam)	Michael Wilberg, SARC Chair	Toni Chute
4 - 4:15 PM	Break		
4:15 - 5:00 PM	SARC Report writing		

Thursday, July 21

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM	SARC Report writing		
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Table 3: 61st SAW/SARC, List of Attendees.

NAME	AFFILIATION	EMAIL
Michael Wilberg	University of Maryland - CES	wilberg@umces.edu
Coby Needle	Marine Scotland Science, Marine Lab-Aberdeen	C.Needle@MARLAB.AC.UK
Mike Bell	Heriot-Watt University Intl Centre for Island Tech	M.C.Bell@hw.ac.uk
Martin Cryer	Ministry for Primary Industries, Wellington	Martin.Cryer@mpi.govt.nz
Russ Brown	NEFSC	Russell.brown@noaa.gov
Jim Weinberg	NEFSC	james.weinberg@noaa.gov
Larry Jacobson	NEFSC	larry.jacobson@noaa.gov
Dan Hennen	NEFSC	Daniel.hennen@noaa.gov
Jessica Coakley	MAFMC	jcoakley@mafmc.org
Mike Simpkins	NEFSC	Michael.simpkins@noaa.gov
Chris Legault	NEFSC	chris.legault@noaa.gov
Sheena Steiner	NEFSC	sheena.steiner@noaa.gov
Michele Traver	NEFSC	Michele.traver@noaa.gov
Toni Chute	NEFSC	toni.chute@noaa.gov
Mark Terceiro	NEFSC	mark.terceiro@noaa.gov
Tom Hoff	Wallace & Associates	tbhoff@verizon.net
Daphne Munroe	Rutgers University	dmunroe@hsrl.rutgers.edu
Tom Alspach	Sea Watch International	talspach@goeaston.net
Eric Powell	University of Southern Mississippi	eric.n.powell@usm.edu
Bob Glenn	Mass. Division of Marine Fisheries	Robert.glenn@state.ma.us
D.H. Wallace	Wallace & Associates	DHWallace@aol.com
Doug Potts	NMFS/GARFO	douglas.potts@noaa.gov
Wendy Gabriel	NEFSC	wendy.gabriel@noaa.gov
Jon Deroba	NEFSC	jonathan.deroba@noaa.gov
Charles Perretti	NEFSC	Charles.perretti@noaa.gov

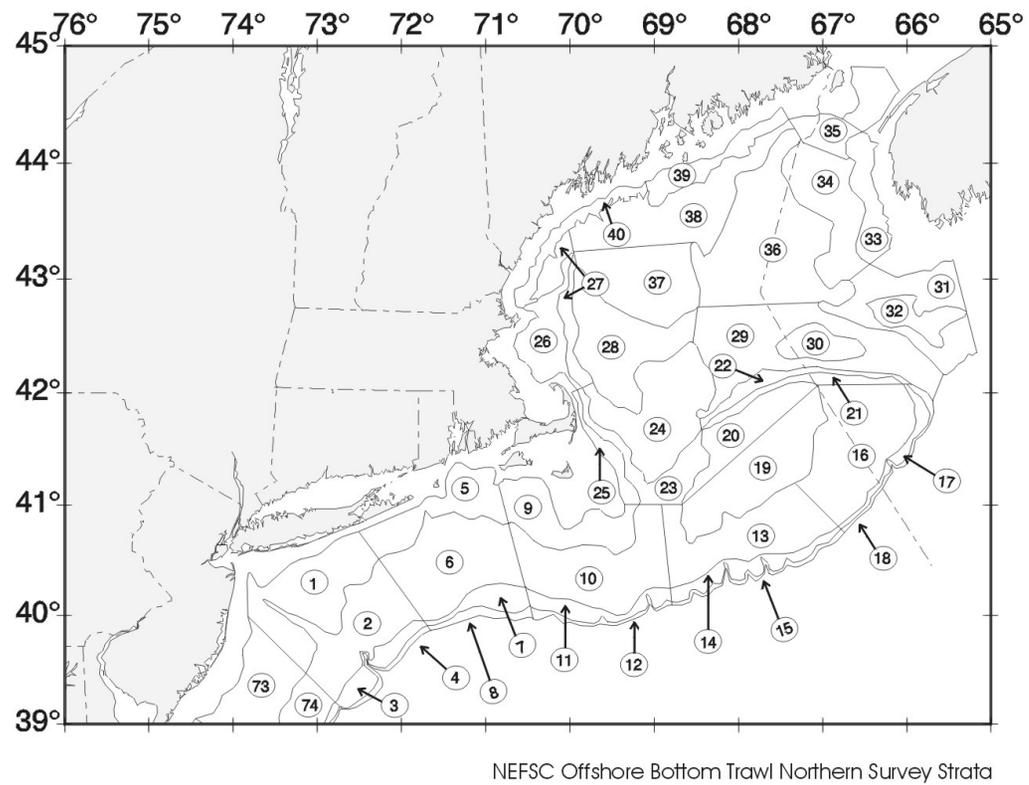
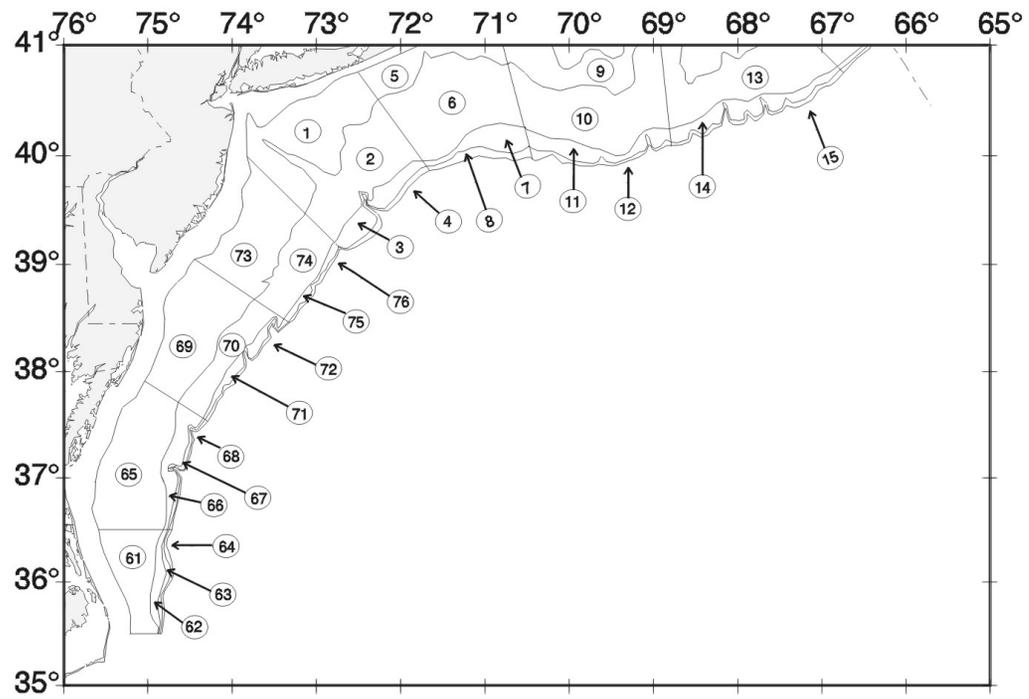


Figure 1: Offshore depth strata that have been sampled during Northeast Fisheries Science Center bottom trawl research surveys. Some of these may not be sampled presently.



NEFSC Offshore Bottom Trawl Southern Survey Strata

Figure 1 cont.

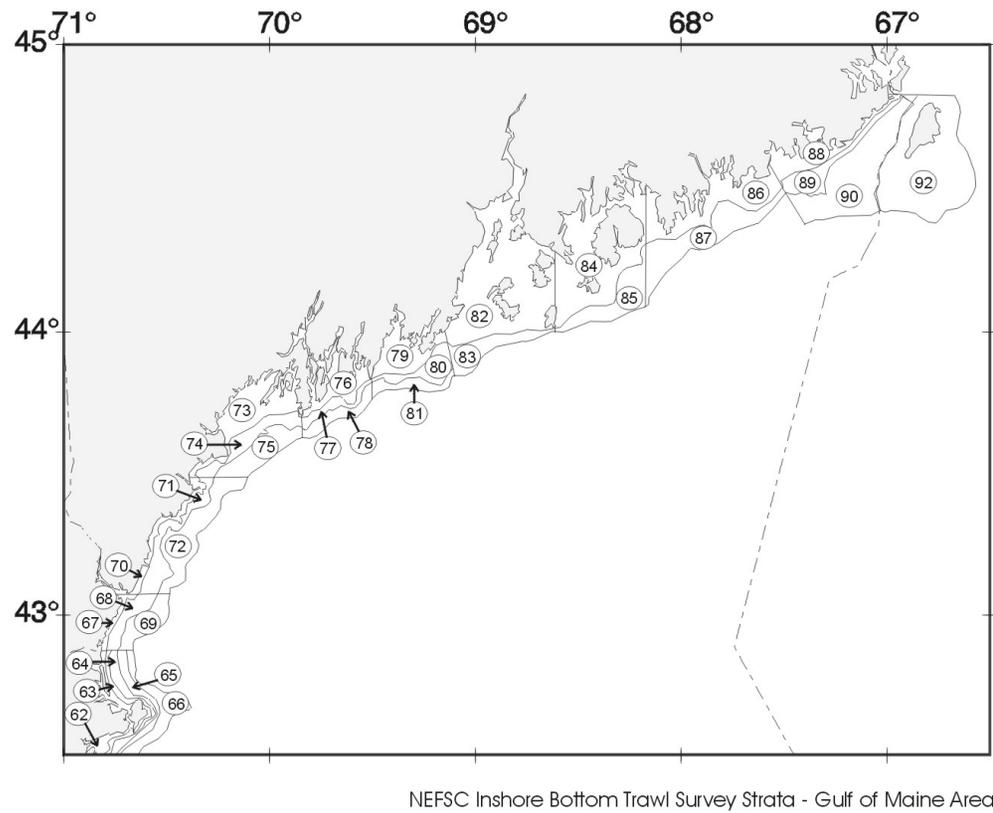
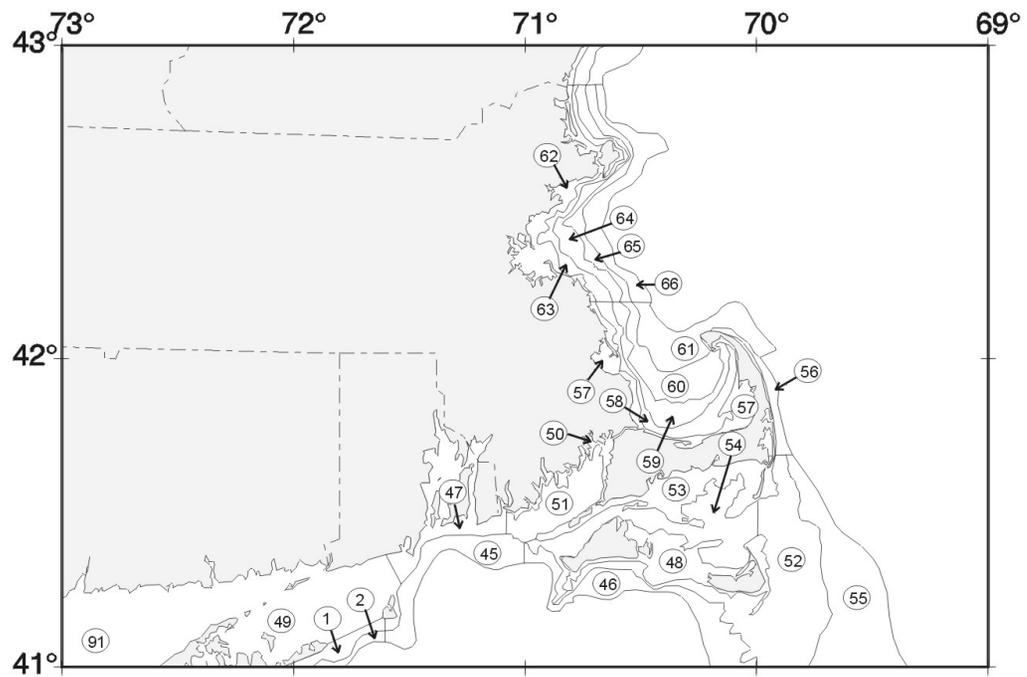
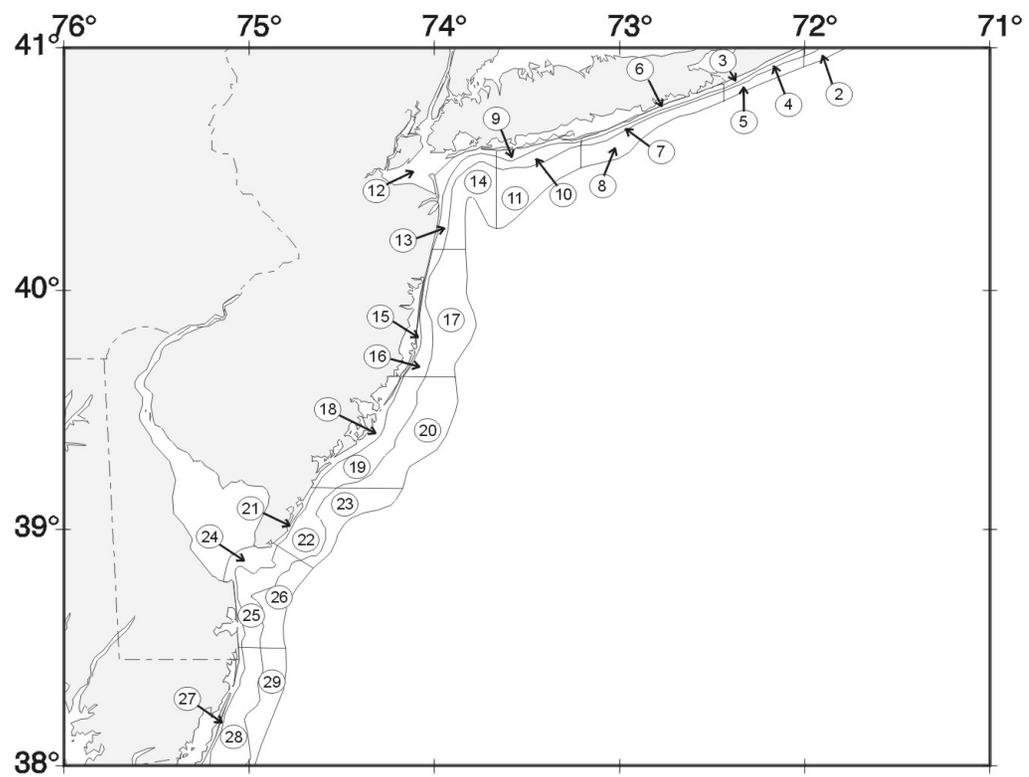


Figure 2: Inshore depth strata that have been sampled during Northeast Fisheries Science Center bottom trawl research surveys. Some of these may not be sampled presently.



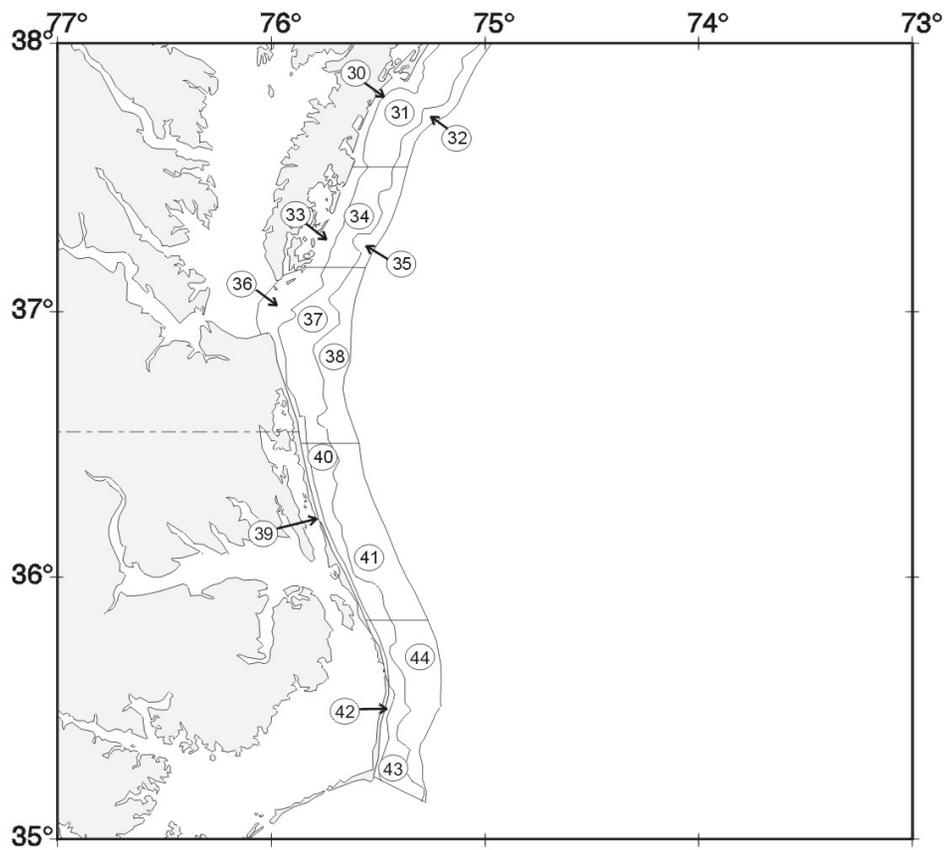
NEFSC Inshore Bottom Trawl Survey Strata - Cape Cod & Southern New England Areas

Figure 2 cont.



NEFSC Inshore Bottom Trawl Survey Strata - Northern Mid Atlantic Area

Figure 2 cont.



NEFSC Inshore Bottom Trawl Survey Strata - Southern Mid-Atlantic Area

Figure 2 cont.

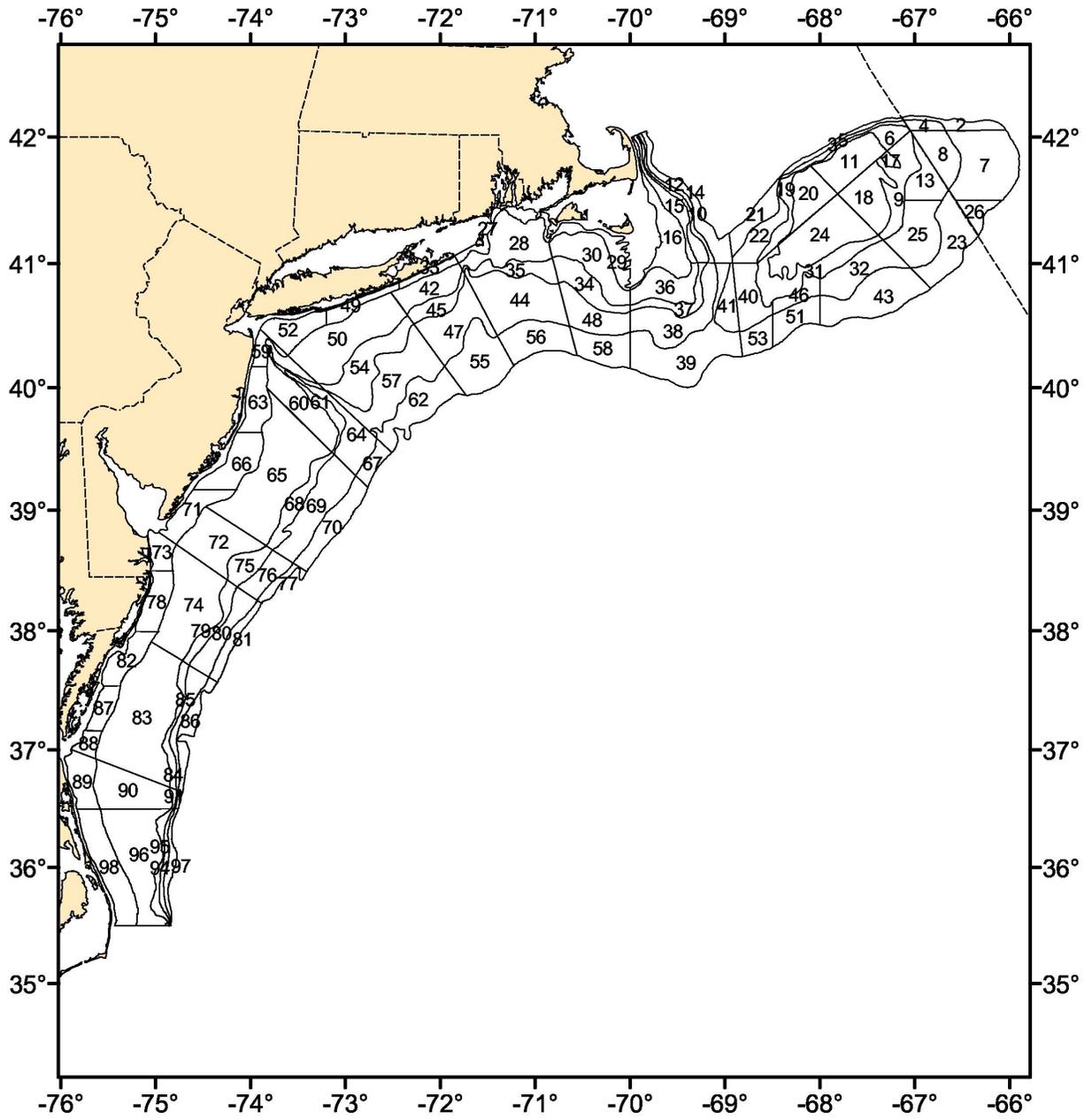


Figure 3: Depth strata sampled during Northeast Fisheries Science Center clam dredge research surveys.

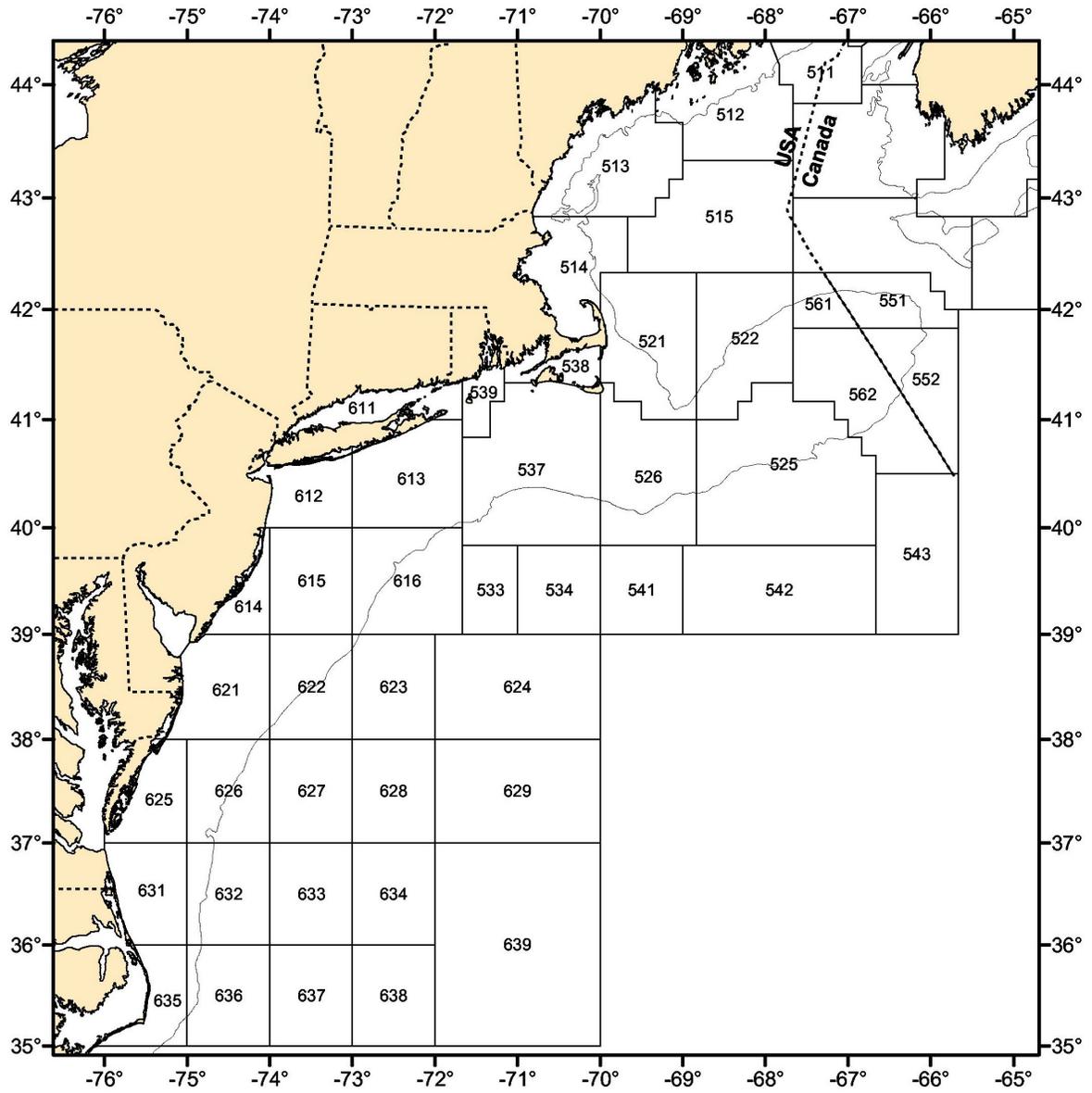


Figure 4: Statistical areas used for reporting commercial catches.

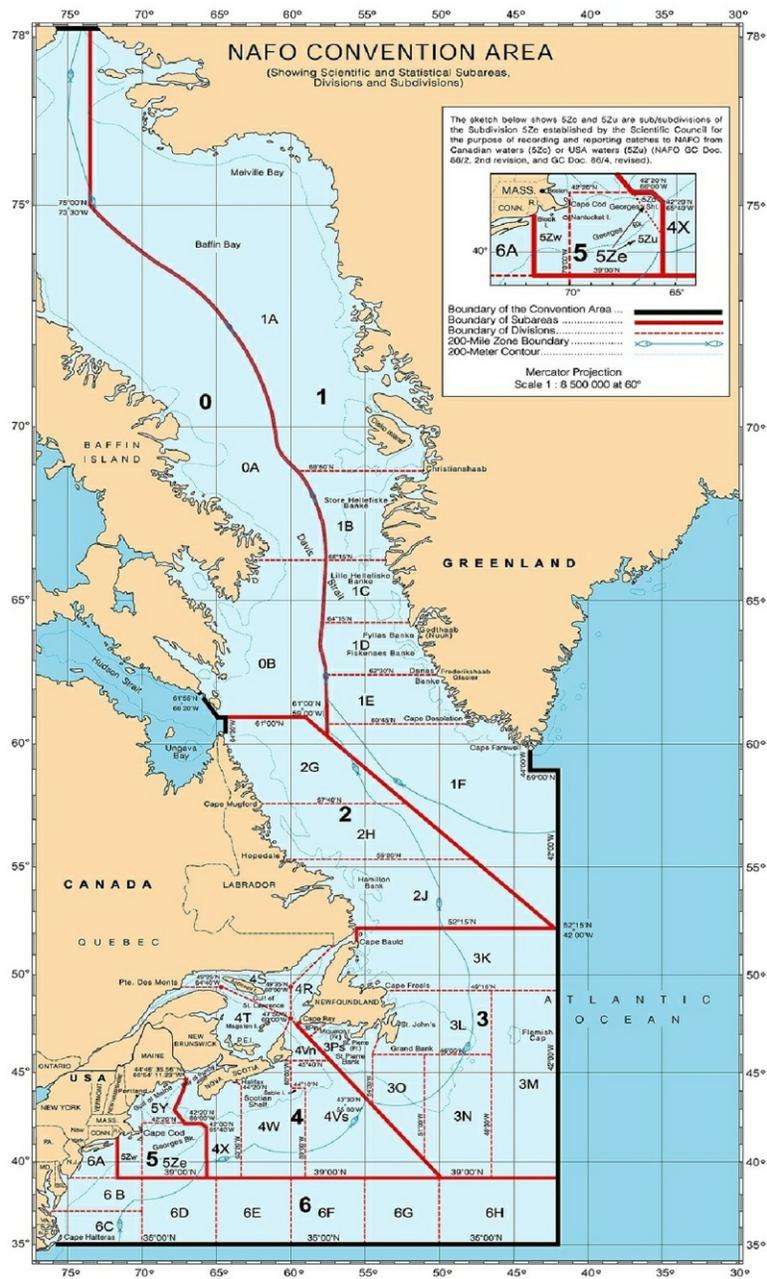


Figure 5: Catch reporting areas of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO).