



April 14, 2000

NOTICE TO SCUP COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN AND DEALERS

New State Regulations for May 1 through October 31, 2000

At its April 13 meeting, the state's Marine Fisheries Commission decided to adopt DMF's recommendations for management of the scup commercial fishery this summer (May 1 through October 31). DMF's recommendations were based on an Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission recent decision to provide Massachusetts with a 22.5863% share of a summer quota of 1,319,270 lbs. or 298,000 lbs. to be increased through a transfer of unused New Jersey summer quota later this year. New Jersey is committed to transfer quota, perhaps increasing our share to as much as **328,000 lbs.** New Jersey has a 3.1431% share, or 41,500 lbs. Therefore, our summer quota will be at least 298,000 lbs., perhaps as high as 328,000 lbs. (30,000 lbs. transfer).

An objective is to avoid a repeat of 1999 – a closure of our fishery on June 28 causing us four months of closure and the loss of our valuable late summer/fall fishery. To accomplish this objective, we've adopted the following approach:

Effective May 1, the possession/landing of scup by commercial fishermen will be prohibited until **July 17** when a daily **200 lbs.** per vessel limit will be allowed. There are **two important exceptions**: (1) 100 lbs. scup bycatch in the squid fishery (May until mid June if the fishery is extended) and (2) unrestricted weir landings, but with a summer cap of 75,000 lbs. The weir "season" is usually only a few weeks in May. A May-June closure would remove all opportunity for weir landings. Furthermore, possession/landing of scup on weekends will be prohibited after July 17. The fishery will close when our summer quota is reached.

DMF and the MFC understand that this quota is far less than summer landings in 1999 when about 500,000 lbs. were landed. Nevertheless, by our insisting, for example, that Massachusetts be allowed to land another 500,000 lbs. this summer, other states would have followed our lead and have abandoned the Plan. We did not want Massachusetts to be responsible for the ruination of the ASMFC scup management plan. We are partners in ASMFC fisheries management, and we decided to demonstrate to our partners that at least for 2000 we will support the plan, even though all our concerns about the interstate plan have not been satisfactorily addressed.

Of note, by prohibiting a directed fishery on scup in May and June, we maximize protection of spawning fish. Scup spawn in our waters in May and June. Also, by delaying the fishery, keeping the limit low, and prohibiting weekend fishing, we increase the chances of regaining the valuable late summer/fall fishery.

[Note: There are new rules for recreational fishermen as well. The recreational fishery possession limit for anglers on private vessels and from shore is 50 fish per angler with a maximum of 200 fish per vessel.]