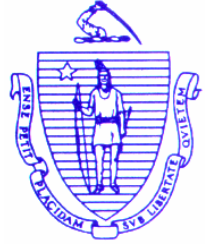




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Marine Fisheries Advisory

***Marine Fisheries* & MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION ADOPT
GROUND FISH PERMIT ENDORSEMENT**

**2005 Permits extended through March 31st &
Additional Groundfish & Monkfish Restrictions Planned**

Marine Fisheries with support from the Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) has approved final specifications on the new State Waters Groundfish Permit Endorsement (GE). Final rules drop the requirement that the permit holder prove groundfish landings during the period 1992 through 2004. Now, anyone who held a Massachusetts commercial fishing permit, excluding shellfish, seaworms and seasonal lobster, on November 4, 2004 and renewed that permit in 2005 will be eligible to obtain the GE; provided that permit holder and/or his vessel does not have a federal multispecies permit. Since the GE will only be issued as an endorsement on a commercial boat or lobster permit, any fisherman who held an individual or rod and reel permit during the eligibility period will be given the option to upgrade to a boat permit in 2006 so that they may obtain the GE. The proposal that would have made the Rod and Reel and Individual commercial fishing permits becoming solely a shore-based permit was also dropped.

To accommodate the administrative delays associated with issuing this new permit endorsement, the deadline for renewing all permits for 2006 has been postponed until April 1, 2006. All valid 2005 permits will remain valid through March 31, 2006. This is a one month addition of the February extension previously announced by *Marine Fisheries* on December 14th.

These actions are steps in a long-term effort to help managers identify the population of active “state-waters” groundfish fishermen and improve management of these fisheries. Future rule-making is expected to restrict catch limits for fishermen authorized to fish for groundfish and monkfish using the GE by reducing trip-limits for cod and establishing limits for other multispecies groundfish. These proposals and other public petitions, ranging from a prohibition of gillnetting in state waters to alternate management programs for gillnet fishing in state waters will be aired at public hearings this spring.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Who may qualify for a Groundfish Endorsement?

A: Anyone who held a state-issued commercial fishing permit, excluding shellfish, seaworms and seasonal lobster, on November 4, 2004, renewed that permit in 2005 and does not have a federal Multispecies permit on the applicant vessel may qualify for a GE to harvest and possess from waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth the 10 regulated “multispecies” groundfish and monkfish up to the daily limits set by state regulations.

Q2: I signed an affidavit and submitted slips that showed I landed groundfish in prior years. Is that necessary?

A: You will need to sign a new affidavit, but you will not be required to demonstrate past landings. You can disregard the affidavit that was mailed out with permit renewals as it is no longer applicable. As a result of public comment, rules were adopted that are more liberal than originally proposed. *Marine Fisheries* will send out a revised affidavit along with instructions so that all fishermen eligible under these new rules will have the option to apply for the State Waters Groundfish Endorsement.

Q3: I have the affidavit that came in my renewal packet, but have not yet filled it out. Do I still need to fill out the section regarding my past landings?

A: See answer to Q2.

Q4: I have a federal "Open Access Handgear Permit" that allows me to catch groundfish with hooks and to sell up to 75 lbs. of cod. Can I get the GE?

A: No. If you have any type of current federal multispecies groundfish permit, you are not eligible. You are allowed to fish in state waters under the authority of your state boat permit and your federal groundfish permit, but must adhere to the most restrictive (lowest) trip limit between state and federal rules.

Q5: Can I give up my federal Multispecies groundfish permit and get the State Waters Groundfish endorsement instead?

A: Yes. If you meet the other eligibility criteria, you may choose to permanently surrender a federal Multispecies groundfish permit in order to obtain the State Waters Groundfish endorsement.

Q6: I cancelled my federal permit for the 2006 fishing year and it is now located in the so-called "History lockbox" may I qualify for a GE?

A: No. Only vessels that have surrendered (permanently) the federal permit may be eligible for a GE.

Q7: If I did not renew my federal permit would I now qualify for a GE?

A: No. Only vessels that have surrendered (permanently) the federal permit may be eligible for a GE.

Q8: Could I transfer my permit or lease my Days-At-Sea to qualify for a GE?

A: No. You are still eligible to put your federal permit back on your vessel and to fish under the federal rules in state waters. You therefore do not need and will not qualify for a GE.

Q9: Although I have a vessel with a federal permit, I also fish from a state-only permitted vessel. Am I eligible to get a GE on the state-only permitted vessel?

A: Yes, provided you meet the other eligibility criteria for the GE.

Q10: Will holders of the GE be required to report their catch?

A: Yes. An annual catch report will be sent to all permit holders at the end of the year.