



David E. Pierce, PhD  
Director

# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

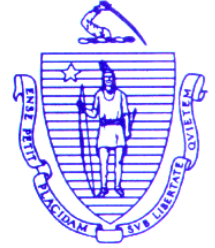
## Division of Marine Fisheries

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February 9, 2018

### Public Hearing Notice 2018 Fishing Limit Adjustments

Under the provisions of M.G.L. c. 30A and pursuant to the authority found at M.G.L. c. 130 §§ 2, 17A and 104, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is proposing draft regulatory amendments to 322 CMR §6.00. The draft regulatory proposals are enumerated below. Additional information, including draft regulations may be found on DMF's [website](#).

1. **Recreational Tautog Limits (322 CMR 6.40).** Following the ASMFC's approval of Amendment 1 to the Tautog FMP, DMF is moving to establish new recreational limits for 2018 (see table). These proposed limits will ensure state rules comply with the FMP. The limits are identical to what has been proposed for Rhode Island, except that Massachusetts will allow 1-fish during the summer months, rather than zero retention.

Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
January 1 – March 31	0-fish	N/A
April 1 – May 31	3-fish	16"
June 1 – July 31	1-fish	16"
August 1 – October 14	3-fish	16"
October 15 – December 31	5-fish	16"

\* There will be a 10-fish maximum vessel limit for private anglers during all periods when the fishery is open

2. **Closing Commercial Striped Bass Fishery on Summer Holidays (322 CMR 6.07).** To prevent user group conflicts around holiday weekends, prohibit commercial striped bass fishing between July 3 – July 5 and on Labor Day.
3. **Commercial Black Sea Bass Limits (322 CMR 6.28).**
  - a. **Number and Sequence of Commercial Fishing Days:**
    - i. Maintain current three open fishing days per week in the directed black sea bass fishery, but adjust the open days so that they are non-sequential. Potential open fishing days would be *Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays* or *Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays*.
    - ii. Reduce the number of open fishing days in a week in the directed black sea bass fishery to two days. Potential open fishing days would be *Sundays and Wednesdays* or *Tuesdays and Fridays*.
  - b. **Trip Limits:** If there is a reduction to the number of open fishing days in the directed black sea bass fishery, then a commensurate increase in the daily trip limits may be considered:
    - i. **Sea Bass Pot:** Trip limits could be increased from 300 pounds up to 400 pounds; and
    - ii. **Other Gears:** Trip limits could be increased from 150 pounds up to 200 pounds.
  - c. **Squid Trawl Fishery Limits and Set Aside:** From April 23 – June 9, allow vessels participating in the small mesh trawl fishery for squid to retain a bycatch of black sea bass.
    - i. **Trip Limit:** Establish a trip limit of 50 pounds per day during this season.

- ii. Set-Aside: Cap the seasonal harvest at a total of 75,000 pounds. Once the cap is reached the retention of sea bass would be prohibited until the directed fishery opens.
4. **Commercial Scup Fishery (322 CMR 6.27)**. To comply with the federal and interstate fishery management plans:
- a. **Commercial Scup Seasons**. Extend the federally managed Winter II Period (currently November – December) to include October. This requires reducing the state-managed summer period (currently May – October) to end after September.
  - b. **Commercial Scup Limits**. Adopt a 200 pound scup limit for trawlers fishing with net mesh openings less than 5” during the period of May 1 – September 30.
5. **Surf Clam Dredge Closure off Plymouth and Dredge Bar Spacing (322 CMR 6.08)**.
- a. Permanently close a discrete area off Ellenville Beach to the use of surf clam dredges from May 1 – October 31. This area was closed by emergency action in 2017.
  - b. Establish a 2” bar spacing requirement for surf clam dredges to reduce the potential harvest of sub-legal sized surf clams.
6. **Commercial Menhaden Bycatch Limits (322 CMR 6.43)**. Clarify that the 1,000 pound bycatch allowance allowed after the commercial quota is taken does not apply to large purse seine vessels.
7. **Use of Bleach in Shellfish Fisheries (322 CMR 6.20)**. Prohibit the possession and use of bleach when fishing for razor clams and soft-shelled clams.

#### **Public Hearing Schedule**

The Division of Marine Fisheries has scheduled two public hearings to take comment on these proposals. The public hearings will be held on:

10AM  
March 05, 2018  
Katherine Cornell Theater  
Tisbury Town Hall  
54 Spring Street  
Vineyard Haven, MA

6PM  
March 05, 2018  
Admiral’s Hall  
MA Maritime Academy  
101 Academy Drive  
Buzzards Bay, MA

#### **Public Comment Instructions**

The Division of Marine Fisheries will also accept public comment through 5PM on Thursday, March 8, 2018. Please address all written comments to Director Pierce and submit to DMF by e-mail at [marine.fish@state.ma.us](mailto:marine.fish@state.ma.us) or by post to 251 Causeway Street, Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114.