



**David E. Pierce, PhD.**  
Director

# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

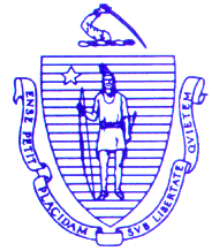
## Division of Marine Fisheries

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March 8, 2019

### Marine Fisheries Advisory

## **DMF TO IMPLEMENT SCHEDULE TO INCREASE WHELK MINIMUM CHUTE GAUGE WIDTH FIRST WHELK GAUGE WIDTH INCREASE EFFECTIVE IN 2019**

The Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), with approval of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission, has approved a schedule to increase the minimum chute gauge width for channeled and knobbed whelks (“whelks”). The chute gauge width will be increased by 1/8” on a biennial basis beginning in 2019 until it reaches the terminal chute gauge width of 3 5/8” in 2029. This year the chute gauge width will be increased from 2 7/8” to 3”. The entire schedule for chute gauge width increases is provided in the table below.

<b>Implemented Schedule for Whelk Chute Gauge Increases 2019-2029</b>						
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2029</b>
<b>Chute Gauge Width</b>	3”	3 1/8”	3 1/4”	3 3/8”	3 1/2”	3 5/8”

The gauging of whelk shall be done using the “any orientation method of gauging” (see image to right). This requires fishermen to gauge each whelk with its operculum facing down and as flat as possible on the chute gauge. If the animal can pass through the gauge with its siphonal canal at any angle to the side walls of the gauge, it is considered of sub-legal length and must be returned to the ocean immediately. It is unlawful to possess sub-legal sized whelks for any period longer than is necessary for immediate measurement and discarding.

If fishermen are not already in possession of a chute gauge measuring 6” length by 3” width by 1 1/2” height, then they are advised to have a machine shop fabricate one for them. The regulations at 322 CMR 6.21(2) establish that these are the dimensions of the chute gauge that will be used in 2019 and 2020 to determine compliance with the legal size.



This action has been taken to enhance spawning stock biomass protections for whelks. The terminal 3 5/8” chute gauge width corresponds to an animal with a shell width of 3 7/8”. Size at

maturity data for whelks in Massachusetts' waters establishes that females begin to reach sexual maturity when the animals reach a shell width of about 3 5/8" and 50% of female whelks are sexually mature at a 3 7/8" shell width. Moreover, the recent stock assessment for channeled whelk in Massachusetts demonstrates the resource is overfished with overfishing occurring.

For more information regarding the management of marine fisheries in Massachusetts, please visit our website ([www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries)) or call DMF at 617-626-1520.