



David E. Pierce, Ph.D.
Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

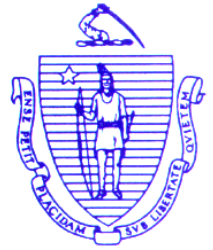
Division of Marine Fisheries

251 Causeway Street, Suite 400

Boston, Massachusetts 02114

(617)626-1520

fax (617)626-1509



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Governor

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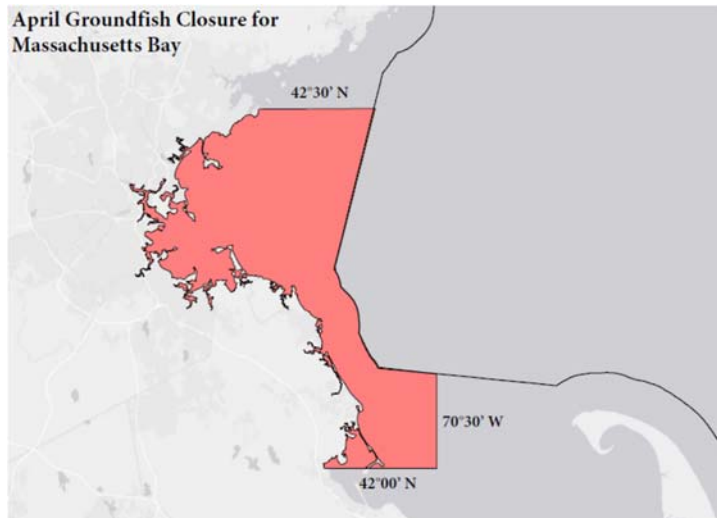
March 27, 2019

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Status of April Commercial Groundfish Closure in State-Waters and Comment Sought on Action to Suspend April Closure for 2019

Overview of New April Groundfish Closure Regulations

The Division of Marine Fisheries has filed new regulations to annually close the month of April to commercial groundfish fishing in those state-waters between 42°30' N latitude (Marblehead) and 42°00' N latitude (Plymouth) that are west of 70°30' W longitude (see map). The purpose of this closure is to achieve groundfish landings by Massachusetts state-waters Groundfish Endorsement (GE) permit holders that do not exceed multi-species groundfish quota sub-components that have been set-aside for state-waters fisheries by the federal government ("state-waters sub-components"), nor compromise federal rebuilding goals for these species.



The regulation also allows the Director to review the available landings data and determine the need for this closure on an annual basis. If the Director determines that the closure is not necessary to achieve its stated purpose, then the closure may be suspended following approval of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission. The Director's recommendation to suspend the closure will be made based on a review of commercial groundfish landings by GE fishermen relative to the state-waters sub-components and overall conservation objectives for relevant groundfish stocks.

Suspension of April Groundfish Closure for 2019

The Director, with the approval of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission, is suspending this pending groundfish closure for April 2019 ([Notice of Declaration](#)). Available GE landings data for federal fishing year 2018 (May 1, 2018-April 30, 2019) for all relevant multi-species groundfish stocks - other than Gulf of Maine winter flounder - indicate the state-waters fishery is well under the state-waters sub-component for the fishing year. While the state is exceeding the state-waters sub-component for Gulf of Maine winter flounder, the available federal quota has been underutilized and provides a sufficient buffer against exceeding the overall annual catch limit for this stock. The GE fishery for winter flounder is also managed in compliance with the ASMFC's Interstate Plan.

Public Comment

The Division of Marine Fisheries seeks written public comment on the decision to suspend the April groundfish closure for 2019. This comment will help inform the agency in future decision-making regarding this closure. The Division will accept written public comment through 5PM on Friday April 12, 2019. Please address all written comments to Director Pierce and submit to DMF by e-mail at marine.fish@state.ma.us or by post to 251 Causeway Street, Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114.

For more information regarding the management of marine fisheries in the Commonwealth please visit our website:

www.mass.gov/marinefisheries