



## MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission April 23, 2024 Meeting Summary

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This document serves as a brief summary of the April 23, 2024 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This business meeting was held virtually via Zoom. All meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#) and the meeting recording has been published to [DMF's YouTube Channel](#). The MFAC will meet again on April 23, 2024. Please check the [MFAC's website](#) for additional information.

### Action Items

The MFAC reviewed and voted on several final recommendations from DMF to amend lobster and trap fishing regulations.

1. Lobster Gauge, V-Notch, Trap Tag, and Escape Vent Rules. The MFAC approved final DMF recommendations to adjust various gauge size, v-notch, trap tag, and escape vent rules affecting the commercial fishery, as necessary to comply Addendum XXVII to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. Consistent with these changes, the MFAC also approved amendments to the gauge size and v-notch standards affecting Massachusetts' wholesale and retail seafood dealers. To accommodate the liquidation of existing inventory, the applicable changes to these dealer standards will go into effect 90-days after each pending change to the commercial fishing rules. Effectively, this will require dealers comply with a v-notch standard of 1/8" depth with or without setal hairs, as well as the smallest minimum carapace size standard and largest maximum carapace size standard of all the LCMAs. Lastly, the MFAC approved to similarly adjusting the rules affecting the recreational lobster fishery in Massachusetts to create common standards across the commercial and recreational fisheries occurring in the same geographic area. See Table 1 for more information.
2. Use of New Fully Formed Weak Rope with Tracer. The MFAC approved a regulatory clarification allowing trap fishers participating in the Massachusetts Mixed Species Pot/Trap Fishery to use fully formed red or red and white ("candy cane" colored weak rope with the "MASS LOBSTER" tracer ribbon visible throughout as a means of singularly complying with the state's weak rope, buoy line diameter, and buoy line marking requirements.
3. Housekeeping. The MFAC approved two discrete housekeeping clarifications. First, a remnant closed black sea bass pot season rule will be corrected so that it becomes into phase with the directed black sea bass pot season. Second, DMF will eliminate references to the Massachusetts Restricted Area in its protected species regulations.

### Discussion Items and Program Updates

*Federal Fisheries Management Update.* DMF briefed the MFAC on the recent April 2024 New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) meeting. The update focused on efforts to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch in monkfish and spiny dogfish gillnet fisheries; proposals to potentially open areas of the Northern Edge of Georges Bank; scientific work being done on the structure of Atlantic cod stocks and how this new science will be integrated into management; and evaluating the NEFMC's risk policy used for evaluating risk tolerance in management decisions.

*Protected Species Update.* DMF provided the MFAC with an update on the North Atlantic right whale (NARW) population; current detection of right whales in Massachusetts state waters and adjacent federal waters; the federal court's ruling against NOAA Fisheries closure of the Massachusetts Restricted Area wedge; the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's on-demand gear testing work in Massachusetts state waters; the status of DMF's Incidental Take Permit application for NARW and endangered sea turtles; DMF outreach to assist commercial trap fishers in complying with gear modification and marking rules; the joint DMF-MEP program to retrieve gear abandoned in the Massachusetts seasonal trap gear closure to protect right whales; and the recent death of an NARW off Marthas Vineyard likely attributable to an entanglement in fishing gear.

*Boston Harbor Menhaden Meeting.* DMF discussed the persistent user group conflict between recreational fishers and menhaden seiners in Boston Harbor. DMF held a meeting recently in Salem with a number of representatives from both user groups to begin to ameliorate this conflict and build functional on-the-water relationships.

*2023 Fisheries Performance Review.* DMF provided the MFAC with a brief presentation on 2023 commercial fishery landings. This looked at broad permitting trends; ex-vessel value by species; quota use; total landings and values; and a comparative look at landings and value by species for certain commercially important species.

**Table 1. Pending Changes and Implementation Schedule for Lobster Gauge, V-Notch, Trap Tag, and Escape Vent Rules**

Effective	LCMA1 and Recreational Gulf of Maine	LCMA 3	OCCLCMA and Recreational Outer Cape	Seafood Dealers
<b>Jan 1, 2025</b>	Limit trap tag issuance to trap allocation with no extra trap tags awarded.  Minimum carapace size increase from 3 1/4" to 3 5/16".	Limit trap tag issuance to trap allocation with no extra trap tags awarded.	Establish 6 3/4" maximum carapace size for state waters.  V-notch standard changes from 1/4" sharp v-notch without setal hairs to 1/8" v-notch with or without setal hairs for state waters.	Minimum carapace size increase from 3 1/4" to 3 5/16".  Establish 6 3/4" maximum carapace size for state waters.  V-notch standard changes from 1/4" sharp v-notch without setal hairs to 1/8" v-notch with or without setal hairs for state waters.
<b>Jan 1, 2026</b>	No Changes	No Changes	No Changes	No Changes
<b>Jan 1, 2027</b>	Minimum carapace size increase from 3 5/16" to 3 3/8".	N/A	N/A	Minimum carapace size increase from 3 5/16" to 3 3/8".
<b>Jan 1, 2028</b>	Trap escape vent size change from 1 15/16" by 5 3/4" rectangular or 2 7/16" circular diameter to 2" by 5 3/4" rectangular or 2 5/8" circular diameter.	N/A	N/A	
<b>Jan 1, 2029</b>	N/A	Maximum carapace size decrease from 6 3/4" to 6 1/2".	Maximum carapace size decrease from 6 3/4" to 6 1/2".	Maximum carapace size decrease from 6 3/4" to 6 1/2".