



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

DMF AMENDS REGULATIONS AFFECTING CERTAIN QUOTA MANAGED SPECIES

For 2022, DMF is amending the regulations affecting the commercial bluefish minimum size, the commercial menhaden directed fishery season, the commercial spiny dogfish trip limit, and the commercial striped bass control date. These changes are further described below.

Commercial Bluefish Minimum Size

Effective this year, DMF is establishing a 16” minimum size for the commercial bluefish fishery. This minimum size was implemented to prevent the misuse of the commercial permit to retain snapper bluefish in excess of the recreational limit for personal consumption. Therefore, all bluefish possessed by anyone commercially fishing for bluefish or commercially fishing while in possession shall meet or exceed the 16” minimum size. Exempt from this are fishermen fishing for bluefin tuna who may retain bluefish less than 16” in length as bait provided the possession of bluefish does not exceed the recreational bag limit. The recreational bag limit for bluefish is 3-fish per angler except when onboard a for-hire vessel during a for-hire trip when the recreational bag limit is 5-fish per angler.

Commercial Menhaden Season

Effective this year, the commercial menhaden season will not open until June 1. The state’s commercial lobster fishery is a primary consumer of locally caught menhaden. As a result of both inshore availability and overarching closures to protect right whales, the state’s commercial lobster fishery does experience substantial bait demands until late May and early June. In recent years, there has been an opportunistic early season catch of menhaden that has resulted in quota closures during the summertime period limiting the availability of fresh local bait to the lobster fishery later in the year. This season start date is designed to better align the commercial menhaden fishery with local bait demand. Exempt from this season start date are weir fishermen—who may opportunistically encounter menhaden in their multi-species gear during the spring—and open entry fishery participants fishing under the 6,000-pound limit.

Spiny Dogfish Trip Limit

DMF is increasing the commercial spiny dogfish trip limit from 6,000 pounds to 7,500 pounds. This action is consistent with the federal specifications for the 2022 Atlantic spiny dogfish fishery (see [Bulletin](#)). The trip limit is being increased due to quota underutilization in recent years. The complementary state action will allow Massachusetts fishermen fishing lawfully in federal waters to land their catch in Massachusetts ports and to take advantage of a higher trip limit if fishing in state waters.

Striped Bass Control Date

DMF is establishing a June 14, 2022 control date for the commercial striped bass regulated fishery permit endorsement. This control date may be used in the future to limit future access and allowable harvest in the commercial striped bass fishery. This replaces the prior September 13, 2013 control date. A more current control date may prove useful if DMF were to limit participation in the commercial striped bass

fishery, as it would be inclusive of recent entrants and the geographic shift of this fishery in recent years to the northern part of the state.

For more information regarding the management of quota managed species, please visit our website (www.mass.gov/marinefisheries) or call DMF at 617-626-1520.