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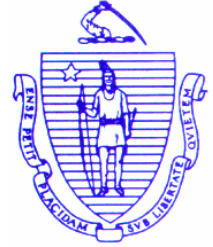
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Marine Fisheries Advisory

RECREATIONAL WINTER FLOUNDER RULES AND AREA 3 LOBSTER MINIMUM SIZE INCREASE TO BE EFFECTIVE JULY 1ST.

At a June 2, 2005 business meeting, the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) approved Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) proposals for new rules affecting recreational fishing for winter flounder. Previously, the MFAC had approved a minimum gauge increase schedule to 3 ½" for commercial lobstermen fishing in Lobster Management Area 3. These issues were discussed at public hearings on March 21-22, 2005 and October 18-19, 2004, respectively.

Recreational winter flounder rules (322 CMR 6.23) regarding area-specific daily catch limits and seasons were amended. The rules for recreational winter flounder fishing in the Gulf of Maine Stock Area (GOM) were relaxed by enacting an eight fish daily possession limit year-round. In response to declining stock status in the Southern New England Stock Area (SNE), the daily possession limit was decreased to four winter flounder per day limited to two 30-day open fishing seasons in the Spring and Fall. The Spring Open Fishing Season begins on the 4th Saturday in April and remains open for 30 consecutive days. The Fall Open Fishing Season begins the 4th Saturday in September and likewise will remain open for 30 consecutive days. Outside of the open fishing seasons it is unlawful to take or possess winter flounder recreationally from the SNE area.

By enacting these rules, the Commonwealth remains in compliance with the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Winter Flounder. Please note that the SNE area includes in the County of Barnstable Pleasant Bay and Nauset Harbor, including all connecting embayments. The SNE area also includes all estuaries and salt ponds that drain to these waters.

The following schedule increases the commercial lobster minimum size to 3 ½" in Area 3 (322 CMR 6.01):

1. 3 3/8 inches until June 30, 2005;
2. 3 13/32 inches from July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006;
3. 3 7/16 inches from July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007;
4. 3 15/32 inches from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008;
5. 3 1/2 inches from July 1, 2008 and beyond.

This increase is part of the approved measures contained in Addendum III to the Interstate Plan for American Lobster.

For further information please visit our website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.