



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Commercial Menhaden Fishery Approved to Access Episodic Event Set Aside Quota

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has approved a request from the Division of Marine Fisheries to allow the Massachusetts commercial menhaden fishery to access the Episodic Event Set Aside (EESA) quota. Effective Thursday, June 23, 2022, the Episodic Event Set Aside Fishery will open in Massachusetts ([Legal Notice](#)). Limited entry fishery participants (those that hold a valid regulated fishery permit endorsement for menhaden) are authorized to harvest menhaden at a 25,000-lb daily trip limit ([Permit Conditions](#)). All other commercial harvesters remain restricted to the 6,000-lb daily trip limit, subject to maximum purse seine size and catch storage requirements. All vessels are restricted to harvesting menhaden from only within the waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth and are required to land in Massachusetts ports. Additionally, daily catch reporting is required to participate.

The Episodic Event Set Aside is a provision of the interstate fishery management plan that sets aside 1% of the annual coastwide commercial quota for the northeast states' shared use should they utilize their available state-specific quota and high abundances of menhaden remain available in state waters prior to September 1. The Division closed the state's quota managed menhaden fishery effective June 21 once reported landings achieved the state's 1.27% share of the coastwide menhaden quota. Landings records and on-the-water observations continue to document a high availability of menhaden in state waters. Opting into the EESA Fishery reduces the state's reliance on the interstate plan's Incidental Catch and Small-Scale Fishery allowance, under which landings are not counted against the coastwide quota, and provides an important supply of bait fish to commercial and recreational fishermen in the Commonwealth. The trip limits implemented by the Division for the EESA Fishery are considerably lower than the interstate plan's 120,000-lb allowance, in order to constrain the pace of landings and balance competing uses of menhaden as bait and forage.

Access to the set aside requires prior approval from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Multiple states will be harvesting from the 4.28-million-lb set aside, and only a part of this quota will be available to the Massachusetts fishery. Based on state reports of EESA use, the Commission will determine when the set aside has been exhausted and the Division will close the EESA Fishery accordingly. At that time, the Division will also announce whether the commercial fishing for menhaden will be restricted to the state's Incidental Catch and Small-Scale Fishery limit, or if a quota transfer has been secured allowing for the Quota Managed Fishery to reopen.

For more information about the management of menhaden in Massachusetts, contact DMF at 617-626-1520 or visit our website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.