



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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July 26, 2024

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Multi-Day Pilot Program for Black Sea Bass Potters and Public Comment on In-Season Adjustment to Increase Black Sea Bass Trip Limits

Based on the performance of the commercial black sea bass fishery to date, DMF is initiating two actions. First, DMF will commence a pilot program that allows black sea bass pot permit holders to possess and land consecutive daily trip limits that were lawfully caught and retained over two consecutive open fishing days provided each day's catch is segregated and tagged. Second, DMF is considering an in-season adjustment to increase the commercial black sea bass trip limits to 600 pounds for potters and 300 pounds for all other gear types.

To be eligible to participate in the pilot program, the permit holder must hold a valid 2024 black sea bass pot permit endorsement. To apply, please provide: (1) permit holder name; (2) vessel name; and (3) DMF permit number in an email to marine.fish@mass.gov. Upon receipt, DMF will review the request and if approved, will provide a Letter of Authorization and a set of single use tags to the permit holder.

With regards to the in-season adjustment, existing regulations automatically increase the commercial black sea bass trip limits from 500 pounds to 600 pounds for potters and from 250 pounds to 300 pounds for other gear types on September 15 if more than 15% of the quota remains available. Based on quota monitoring data, DMF anticipates that this threshold will be reached. However, given landings to date and available quota, DMF seeks to potentially increase the trip limits as soon as August 21, rather than September 15.

As of today, July 26, Massachusetts has landed approximately 18% of its annual black sea bass quota. Based on current performance, DMF does not anticipate the 2024 commercial black sea bass quota will be reached before the fish migrate out of our waters during the fall. These two actions will increase access to the available quota. According to the most recent stock assessment, black sea bass are not overfished, overfishing is not occurring, and the biomass is well above the target level. This action seeks to achieve the state's 926,338-pound quota and responds to lower than anticipated commercial fishing effort at the start of the season.

Instructions for Public Comment

DMF seeks written public comment on the recommended in-season adjustment to increase commercial black sea bass trip limits effective August 21, 2024. DMF will accept public comment through Friday, August 9, 2024. All comments are to be submitted to DMF by e-

mail (marine.fish@mass.gov) to the attention of Director McKiernan. Public comment will be considered in DMF's final recommendation to the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC). The MFAC will review the public comment and vote on DMF's final recommendation on August 20, 2024.

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