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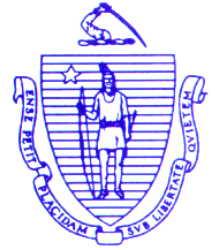
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August 16, 2019

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Director's Decisions on In-Season Adjustments to Commercial Fluke and Striped Bass Limits

On July 31, the Division of Marine Fisheries announced proposed in-season adjustments to the commercial fluke and striped bass fishing limits to facilitate the harvest and landing of the state's commercial quotas for these species and to account for the potential loss of fishing opportunities due to weather during the fall ([Advisory](#)). Written public comment was accepted for a two-week period. On August 15, the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) unanimously supported the following recommendations of the Division's Director.

Fluke

Effective November 1, 2019, commercial fluke fishing will be allowed 7-days per week at a trip limit of 1,000 pounds per trip. This action opens Friday and Saturday and increases the trip limits from 200 pounds for hook fishermen and 300 pounds for net fishermen ([Director's Declaration](#)).

The Division had proposed to increase the trip limits and open days as soon as August 18 to more fully utilize the Commonwealth's 2019 fluke quota, which was increased by 80% from 2018 in mid-March. In consideration of public comment, the above described action was recommended by the Director and subsequently approved by the MFAC. This action seeks to: 1) provide the inshore fishing fleet more access to the quota by way of a longer fishing season, which in recent years has been curtailed in August or even July due to low quota; and 2) provide offshore fishing vessels late fall access to the quota given the minimal landings they accrued this past winter due to the low trip limits.

Additionally, the Division will develop a pilot program for implementation in early September through October 31 that will authorize trawlers to possess and land two 300-pound limits caught on two consecutive open fishing days. The details of the program and how to apply will be announced later this month. The pilot program is intended to assist fishermen in fishing more remote areas of state waters where long steams back to port reduce profits.

Striped Bass

No action will be taken to amend the commercial striped bass fishing limits at this time. This decision is based primarily on updated commercial landings data and quota utilization projections. The extensive public comment was also taken into consideration.

The Division had proposed to increase the number of open fishing days from two to four, beginning in late August or early September, based on quota projections showing that the fishery would not harvest its quota prior to the fish's southerly migration. Average daily landings have increased roughly 50% since then, which if continued, could result in the quota being taken by early October. Thus no action is warranted at this time.

However, should the landings wane—as they typically do in the fall—an increase in the open days may be considered beginning in the latter part of September. If action is taken then, it will be done with the explicit intention of having 2019 landings not exceed a self-imposed 713,000-pound threshold. This threshold equates to the 18% reduction being proposed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission for implementation in 2020 to end overfishing on striped bass and achieve the fishing morality target.

For more information regarding the management of marine fisheries in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, please visit our website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.