



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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October 26, 2023

Marine Fisheries Advisory

PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT ON PROPOSED IN-SEASON ADJUSTMENT TO DECREASE PERIOD I SUMMER FLOUNDER LIMIT FOR 2024

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is proposing to decrease the summer flounder commercial trip limit for the 2024 Period I fishery (January 1–April 22, 2024) from 10,000 pounds to 5,000 pounds. This responds to an anticipated decrease in the state's commercial summer flounder quota of about 56% for 2024. The Period I summer flounder fishery is allocated 30% of the state's annual quota and may face an early closure under the current 10,000-pound trip limit given this quota reduction. While DMF intends to propose formal amendments to its commercial summer flounder regulations this winter for potential changes this spring, due to the timing of the Period I fishery, DMF is proposing to use its declaratory authority to make an “in-season adjustment” to this trip limit.

This large reduction in the state's quota is being driven by two factors. First, the coastwide quota is being reduced by 42% (from 15.27 to 8.79 million pounds) in response to the most recent stock assessment that shows that while the stock is not overfished, overfishing was occurring in 2022 and spawning stock biomass has been overestimated in recent years and is now trending downward. Second, because the coastwide quota is being reduced below 9.55 million pounds, the state's quota allocation will be its baseline 6.82% share, rather than the near 9% share we have experienced in recent years under the provisions of Amendment 21 to the Fishery Management Plan that attempt to increase equity across states when the stock is in a strong condition.

How to Submit Comment

Written public comment is now being sought on this in-season adjustment proposal. DMF will accept written public comment through 5PM on Thursday, November 9, 2023. Please submit written comments to Director Daniel McKiernan by e-mail (marine.fish@mass.gov). All written public comment will be considered by DMF and its Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission. DMF anticipates the MFAC will vote on a final DMF recommendation at its November 17, 2023 business meeting.

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