



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

DMF Adopts Emergency Regulations to Establish Commercial Striped Bass Fishery as Limited Entry and Owner Operator

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has adopted a series of emergency regulations affecting commercial striped bass permitting for 2026. First, the issuance of commercial striped bass regulated fishery permit endorsements will be restricted to only those people who held one in 2024 or 2025. Further instructions will be made available prior to the 2026 permit renewal period describing how the qualified permit holders can renew their commercial striped bass regulated fishery permit endorsement for 2026. Second, all commercial striped bass regulated fishery permit endorsements issued will be "owner-operator" thereby requiring the named permit holder be present when any commercial striped bass fishing activity is occurring under the authority of their permit. Third, the striped bass endorsements will not be transferable. Lastly, DMF has updated the control date for regulated striped bass fishery permit endorsements from June 14, 2022 to December 31, 2025.

DMF will host a virtual public hearing on these emergency regulations on Tuesday, December 2, 2025 at 6PM via Zoom. You can register to attend this public hearing via this [Zoom registration link](#). To access more information, please use this [link to the full public hearing notice](#) and this [link to DMF's webpage for proposed amendments to regulations](#).

The striped bass resource is currently assessed to be below its biomass threshold and is therefore subject to a rebuilding plan. The success of the rebuilding plan is challenged by environmentally driven recruitment failure. As a consequence, fishing mortality will need to be maintained at a low level for the foreseeable future. Massachusetts' striped bass commercial quota has already been reduced to roughly half of its peak level, contributing to a truncated season. These realities warrant a reconsideration of the open access approach to managing this fishery to preserve remaining commercial fishing opportunities for a smaller number of existing participants.

Making striped bass endorsements owner-operator and non-transferable will prevent the activation of latent effort. The owner-operator requirement will further contribute to improved accountability, compliance, and enforcement, and is consistent with the small-scale nature of the fishery. Over the course of the coming year, DMF will work to establish an exit-entry program to manage attrition, inactivity, and new entrants.

The control date is a tool that may be paired with prior fishing activity as part of qualifying criteria to renew the fishing permit in future years. Therefore, should DMF move to further restrict access into the commercial striped bass fishery in the future, the more current control date allows for the inclusion of fishing activity through the end of the 2025 commercial striped bass season. Fishing activity that occurs beginning in 2026 would not be included in any potential qualification criteria under the new December 31, 2025 control date.