



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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### Marine Fisheries Advisory

## **DMF Establishes New Atlantic Mackerel Permit Requirement and Fishing Limit**

The 2021 Atlantic mackerel stock assessment shows the species is overfished and subject to overfishing. Accordingly, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved an updated rebuilding plan to rebuild the species by 2032. Relevant here, Amendment 23 to the Atlantic mackerel fishery management plan establishes a 20-fish recreational limit for federal waters and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council requested the New England states adopt complementary recreational measures for state-waters, as harvest in the region principally occurs inshore. Additionally, for 2023, NOAA Fisheries will be reducing the commercial mackerel quota by 79% and amending in-season closures for the commercial fishery.

In response, DMF has implemented a new permitting requirement and fishing limit for the Atlantic mackerel fishery. The purpose of this advisory is to explain how these new management actions apply. If you have additional questions not answered here, please e-mail us at [marine.fish@mass.gov](mailto:marine.fish@mass.gov).

### Commercial Mackerel Permit Endorsement & Reporting Requirements

For 2023, DMF has established a new commercial regulated fishery permit endorsement for Atlantic mackerel. Commercial fishers are required to add this endorsement to their commercial fishing permit if they intend to retain, possess, or land mackerel for sale. Additionally, this permit endorsement is required for any fisher to catch, possess, or land more than the 20-fish limit described below. If you are a commercial fisher who uses mackerel as bait in another commercial rod and reel fishery (e.g., bluefin tuna or striped bass) you are advised to obtain this endorsement if your fishing activity will result in catching, retaining, possessing, or landing more than 20 mackerel in a calendar day.

All commercial fishers, regardless of whether they hold an Atlantic mackerel endorsement, are required to report their mackerel catch on the commercial fishing reports. This includes all mackerel caught for sale, as well as mackerel caught for personal use and bait. DMF's commercial trip level reports are to be submitted monthly by the fifteenth of the following month, even if the permit is not fished. Reports can be submitted electronically or on paper. Paper reports are to be sent to DMF's Statistics Project, 30 Emerson Avenue, Gloucester, MA 01930. Failure to submit accurate reports in a timely fashion may result in the non-renewal of the commercial fishing permit. Please visit DMF's reporting [website](#) for more information.

### Open Access and Recreational Mackerel Limit

Fishers who do not hold a regulated commercial mackerel permit endorsement, including all recreational anglers, are subject to a daily 20-fish limit. This limit applies both as a daily harvest limit per person and as a per person possession limit. In instances where there are multiple fishers on a vessel, catch may be aggregated and possession limits will be determined by dividing the total number of mackerel by the total number of fishers onboard. Lawfully caught mackerel may be aggregated shore-side (e.g., freezers, holding cars) for future use and non-conforming quantities may be possessed.

Please be reminded that combining recreational and commercial trips is prohibited. Therefore, fishers may not obtain a commercial mackerel permit endorsement to exceed this limit when recreationally fishing for other species (e.g., striped bass, bluefin tuna) on the same trip.

During the public hearing process, DMF received several comments from for-hire operators requesting an exemption allowing the vessel to leave the dock before the clientele arrives to obtain bait in excess of this 20-fish per person limit, but consistent with the number of patrons expected to be onboard the charter. DMF did not explicitly allow for this in the final rule. However, for-hire operators may obtain a commercial permit and Atlantic mackerel endorsement; conduct a commercial trip prior to taking clientele aboard and retain and possess mackerel in excess of the 20-fish per person limit; terminate that commercial trip when they return to port and bring clients onboard; and then possess the mackerel retained during that commercial trip when conducting the for-hire trip, provided the quantity of mackerel possessed does not exceed the aggregate limit for the number of persons onboard.

Visit our website at [www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries) for more information regarding the Commonwealth's marine fisheries, including a recent "[Creature Feature](#)" on Atlantic mackerel.