



# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

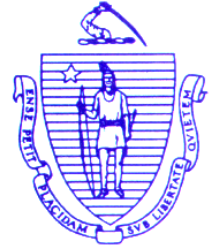
## Division of Marine Fisheries

251 Causeway Street, Suite 400

Boston, Massachusetts 02114

(617) 626-1520

fax (617) 626-1509



**Charles D. Baker**  
Governor

**Karyn E. Polito**

Lieutenant Governor

**Kathleen Theoharides**

Secretary

**Ronald Amidon**

Commissioner

**Mary-Lee King**

Deputy Commissioner

November 13, 2019

### Marine Fisheries Advisory

## **Rule Changes for the 2020 Commercial Tautog Fishery: Tagging Program Implemented and Entry Limited Based on Qualifying Criteria**

### Commercial Tautog Tagging Program

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) approved Amendment 1 to its Tautog Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in August 2019. This amendment requires all coastal states with a commercial tautog fishery to implement a harvester tagging program for 2020. The purpose of this program is to require all fish in commerce be tagged to reduce poaching coast-wide. DMF has recently promulgated its implementing regulations and this advisory serves to provide an overview of this new tagging program. Supplemental information will be made available over the next six months further detailing how this program will be administered and enforced.

Under this new tagging program, commercial fishermen will be required to tag their commercial catch through the operculum (see image) prior to offloading the fish from the fishing vessel and selling the fish into commerce. The tautog tags are single use metal tags inscribed with the calendar year, state of issuance, and sequential tag number. DMF will make tags available to commercial fishermen prior to the September 1 start of the 2020 commercial fishing season. All unused tags are to be returned to DMF within two weeks of the end of the commercial fishing season with a



harvester tagging report documenting tags issued, tags used, tags lost and tags returned. While tags will be issued by DMF, harvesters will be required to purchase a tag applicator. Details regarding how to purchase this tag applicator will be provided directly to commercial tautog permit holders in advance of the 2020 commercial fishing season.

Dealers and seafood purveyors will be prohibited from purchasing any tautog or portions thereof that do not bear a tag from the state of harvest. Whole tautog, whether live or dead, are to be tagged through the operculum. If the tautog is processed into fillets, the tag is to be cut out of the operculum and remain with the fillet until all portions are sold. Primary buyers are to liquidate their supply of Massachusetts tagged tautog within two-weeks of the end of the commercial fishing season. Tags expire at the end of the year and dealers may not acquire any tautog from any jurisdiction bearing an expired tag. Any fish in the possession of dealers or seafood purveyors with a tag from the prior

calendar year may only be sold to an end consumer and all such tautog must be sold off or disposed of by February 28.

#### Commercial Tautog Permitting

In order to effectively administer this tagging program in a manner that complies with the ASMFC's Tautog FMP, DMF has limited entry into the commercial tautog fishery in 2020. This has been done by using the existing August 28, 2017 control date and certain qualifying criteria. Only those permit holders who meet the criteria described below will be eligible to renew their permit in 2020. The qualifying criteria are: (1) a commercial fisherman must have held a commercial tautog permit in 2018 or 2019; and (2) sold more than 120 pounds of tautog to a seafood dealer in any calendar year between 2010 and 2016. This qualifying (2010 – 2016) time-period represents those years between the implementation of mandatory trip level harvester reporting (2010) and the August 28, 2017 control date.

DMF has audited its permitting database and dealer and harvester data to determine those commercial tautog permit holders who are eligible to obtain a commercial tautog permit in 2020. All other commercial fishermen will be deemed ineligible to obtain a permit in 2020. Moving forward tautog permits may only be obtained through a transfer of an existing commercial tautog permit, subject to criteria to be established by the Director. Those fishermen who held a commercial tautog permit in 2018 or 2019 will receive a letter in the mail from DMF notifying them as to whether or not they are eligible to obtain a tautog permit in 2020.

For more information regarding the management of tautog in Massachusetts, please contact DMF at 617-626-1520 or visit our website at [www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries).