



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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November 23, 2020

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Public Comment Sought on Proposed Increase to 2021 Summer Flounder Period I (January 1 – April 22) Commercial Trip Limit

For 2021, Massachusetts' summer flounder commercial quota is expected to increase by as much as 29% from its 2020 level due to pending revisions to both the coastwide commercial quota and the manner in which this quota is allocated amongst the Atlantic coastal states. In order to distribute the anticipated quota increase throughout the year and amongst the various fishery participants, DMF is proposing to adjust the 2021 summer flounder Period I (January 1–April 22) commercial trip limit from 1,000 pounds to 2,000 pounds. Instructions on how to submit public comment on this proposal are provided below.

The coastwide quota is expected to increase 8%, from 11.53 million pounds to 12.49 million pounds. This change is a product of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's recently revised risk policy that allows the Council to set higher catch limits for stocks that are assessed at or above biomass targets. Additionally, a new method for the state-by-state quota allocations is due to be implemented. This method allocates the first 9.55 million pounds of the coastwide quota according to the existing state shares (based on 1980–1989 landings), while any quota above this amount is allocated in equal shares of 12.375% to all states (except ME, NH, and DE which share 1% of the additional quota). At the anticipated 12.49 million-pound coastwide quota for 2021, Massachusetts' state allocation increases from roughly 6.8% to 8.1%. Once implemented, these actions combined will increase Massachusetts' 2021 quota from 786,399 pounds to 1,015,179 pounds.

Massachusetts' Period I commercial summer flounder fishery (January 1–April 22) has a target allocation of 30% of the annual state quota, and a 1,000-pound trip limit. With the anticipated quota increase, the Period I fishery's harvest target will include an additional 68,000 pounds. Based on landings information from 2020, when the Period I trip limit was increased to 2,000 pounds effective February 23, this additional quota for the Period I fishery will allow for a 2,000-pound trip limit in 2021 effective January 1. Such adjustments for quota managed species are made through Director's Declarations and the issuance of temporary Permit Conditions. By regulation, if 25% of the annual quota is taken during Period I, the trip limit will be reduced to 100 pounds for the remainder of the period.

DMF is accepting public comment on this proposed adjustment through 5PM on Monday, December 7, 2020. Written comment may be submitted to Director Daniel McKiernan by e-mail to marine.fish@mass.gov or by post to 251 Causeway Street, Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114. The Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission will consider adopting this trip limit increase at its December 10, 2020 business meeting.

For more information regarding the management of summer flounder in Massachusetts, please visit our website (www.mass.gov/marinefisheries) or call DMF at 617-626-1520.