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Marine Fisheries Advisory

In-Season Adjustment to Increase Commercial Summer Flounder Period I Trip Limit

The Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), with approval of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission, has taken action to increase the 2026 Period I (January 1–April 22) commercial summer flounder possession and landing limit from 2,000 pounds to 4,000 pounds ([Declaration Notice](#)). This trip limit is reduced to 100 pounds once 15% of the annual quota is projected to be taken.

The Period I fishery occurs offshore in federal waters on multi-day trips. The period is currently allocated 15% of the state's annual quota. The state's 2026 commercial summer flounder quota is increasing to roughly 1 million pounds, resulting in a Period I quota allocation of about 150,000 pounds. Based on last year's data, DMF anticipates the Period I fishery would land less than 30% of its quota allocation under status quo limits. Accordingly, DMF is increasing the Period I trip limit for 2026 to enhance utilization of the available quota. This is being done through an in-season adjustment for 2026 because DMF cannot timely respond to the quota increase through its normal rule making process. However, DMF will hold public hearings later this winter to discuss broader changes to the commercial summer flounder management program for 2026 and 2027.

The 2025 stock assessment for summer flounder demonstrated that spawning stock biomass has increased since the last assessment and is at 83% of its biomass target. Moreover, the assessment predicts spawning stock biomass will continue to grow and be above the target level in 2026. As a result, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission set the coastwide commercial quota at 12.78 million pounds for 2026 and 2027—a 45% increase compared to 2025. Under the interstate fishery management plan for this species, Massachusetts' quota share increases when the coastwide quota exceeds 9.55 million pounds. As a result, our quota is increasing by 75% from 2025 to 2026 and will remain at this level for 2027.

Note that DMF is not reauthorizing the so-called "Multi-State Program" for 2026. When authorized, this program allows vessels permitted to land summer flounder in multiple states to possess non-conforming quantities of summer flounder when offloading a state's limit provided fish destined for each state are segregated and clearly labeled and the limit for each state is not exceeded.

For more information on the management of commercial fisheries in Massachusetts, please visit our website: www.mass.gov/marinefisheries