



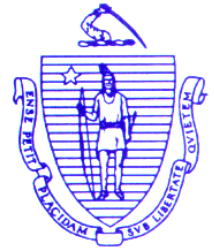
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## **Division of Marine Fisheries**

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December 31, 2015  
*Marine Fisheries Advisory*

### **DMF to Host a Series of Meetings to Discuss Issues Affecting the Lobster, Crab and Whelk Fisheries**

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Fishermen are invited to attend a series of meetings with the Division of Marine Fisheries and the Environmental Police on lobster, crab and whelk fisheries issues. The meetings will be held on Saturday, January 23, 2016 at the Sea Crest Beach Hotel, 350 Quaker Road, North Falmouth, MA. The meetings will run from 11:00 AM to approximately 4:00 PM and will address a variety of topics. The schedule for these meetings can be found below, along with a brief description of each meeting.

#### **Forum on Whelk Management – 11:00 AM**

At 11:00 AM, DMF and Law Enforcement will meet with industry to discuss certain whelk management issues. The purpose of the meeting is two-fold. First, DMF is looking to engage the fishery on minimum size and minimum size compliance. Second, DMF wants to discuss recent reported increases in gear loss and requests for trap tag replacement with industry members.

Since implementing the “chute” gauge in 2013 there has been some confusion regarding the method of measurement. Current regulations require the vertical axis of the whelk be aligned with the center line of the chute. As some whelk may not be perfectly symmetrical discussion about how to properly gauge these animals is warranted. It is DMF’s preference to move from the current method of measurement to an “any vertical orientation” method. This means the whelk would be measured with the operculum facing down and the siphonal canal aligned as far to the side of the chute as possible. Using this method would address gauging issues resulting from this animal’s asymmetrical shape. DMF has discussed this with its Marine Fisheries Commission and would like to engage the industry directly on the practical benefits of amending regulations to adopt this new method of measurement.

However, there are minimum size implications associated with adopting this new method of measurement. DMF studies indicate that if this new technique was to be adopted and the internal gauge width remained the same, there would be a de facto minimum size increase of approximately  $\frac{3}{16}$  of an inch. Accordingly, DMF would like to discuss the conservation benefits of increasing the minimum size.

Additionally, DMF has received an increasing number of requests for replacement trap tags above and beyond the 10% provided. This raises concerns about why gear loss is increasing, whether it is preventable and to what extent these requests should be accommodated. DMF is looking for industry feedback on this issue.

## **Public Hearing on Emergency Regulations Affecting Pot Fisheries – 12:30 PM**

In late December 2015, DMF will be filing a series of emergency regulations affecting pot fisheries. A public hearing will be held on these emergency regulations at 12:30 PM. A [full public hearing notice](#) can be viewed on our website, but the management actions are summarized in the bullets below:

- **Trap Gear Configuration.** DMF complemented existing federal Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan rules affecting trap gear configuration. This includes LMA-specific endline marking requirements for single pots and trawls, prohibitions on the fishing of single pots in certain waters north of Cape Cod, and configuration requirements for single trap and trawl buoy lines.
- **Recreational Trap Gear Haul Out.** DMF is requiring recreational fishermen be required to remove their trap gear from the Massachusetts Seasonal Closure Area during the period of February 1 – April 30. This will further reduce the risk of entanglements of endangered right whales in endlines. Moreover, it will enhance the capability to identify and remove abandoned gear.
- **LMA 2 Trap Allocation Reduction and Permit and Trap Transfers.** DMF has implemented a trap allocation reduction schedule for LMA2. Effective January 1, 2016, LMA2 trap allocation will be reduced for fishing year 2016-17 by 25%, then there will be an additional 5% annual reduction over the following four years. This is consistent with Addendum XXI to the ASMFC's American Lobster FMP. To address this mandatory trap allocation reduction, DMF will allow LMA2 fishermen through approved transfers to acquire multiple coastal lobster permits and trap allocations to anticipate future allocation cuts
- **Jonah and Rock Crab Rules.** DMF implemented a series of conservation rules affecting the possession and landing of jonah and rock crabs. This includes rules governing minimum size, crab disposition, non-trap possession and landing limits and recreational harvest limits. These rules are consistent with the recently adopted ASMFC Jonah Crab FMP. While the ASMFC FMP applied only to jonah crabs, DMF has extended these provisions to apply to both jonah and rock crabs to improve enforcement and compliance because these two species of crab are difficult to differentiate.

## **Round Table on Lobster Management – 2:00 PM**

At 2:00 PM, DMF and Law Enforcement will hold its annual round table meeting. This meeting provides an opportunity for industry to engage state officials on new stock assessment information, fishery trends, compliance and enforcement issues and other subjects of concern to the industry.