



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

UPDATE ON TIMELINE FOR PENDING PROTECTED SPECIES REGULATIONS

In December 2020, Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) concluded the public hearing and comment period on proposed protected species regulations affecting trap and gillnet fishing ([Hearing Notice](#)). DMF initially intended to bring a final recommendation to its Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) at their January 7, 2021 business meeting ([Advisory](#)). However, the agency received extensive written and oral testimony on these proposed regulations and postponed this business meeting until January 28, 2021. This was done to provide DMF and the MFAC with sufficient time to review all the comments and for DMF to craft a responsive final regulatory recommendation for the MFAC's review.

With this three-week postponement of the January MFAC business meeting, DMF is no longer on schedule to promulgate final regulations for February 1, 2021. New rules will likely go into effect between mid-February and early-March. As a result, only those waters within the Massachusetts Restricted Area will be closed to trap gear fishing on February 1. All other waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth will not be subject to a trap gear closure until a final rule is promulgated.

To keep stakeholders informed about the rule making process and timeline, DMF will provide other advisories this winter. First, prior to the January 28, 2021 MFAC business meeting, DMF will provide the Commission with its recommendation; this document will be posted to DMF's web site and an email advisory will be sent out announcing its availability. Second, following the January 28, 2021 MFAC business meeting, DMF will announce to the public what final recommendations the MFAC approved. Lastly, once final regulations are filed with the Massachusetts Secretary of State, DMF will formally announce the new regulations and a timeline for implementation.

For more information regarding the proposed protected species regulations, please visit [DMF's website](#). For more information about the upcoming MFAC business meeting, please visit the [MFAC's website](#).