



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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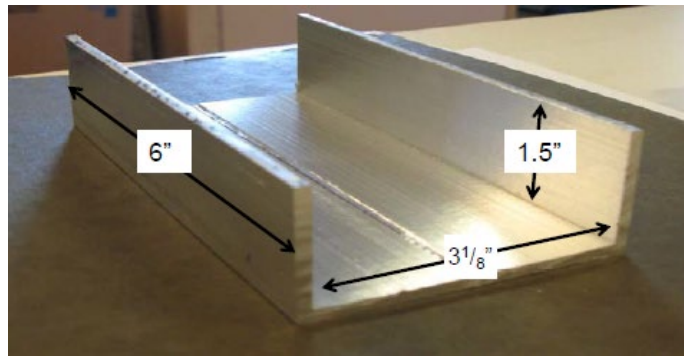
April 14, 2021

### Marine Fisheries Advisory

### Reminder: Whelk Gauge Since Increase in Effect for 2021

With the commercial conch pot fishery scheduled to open on this Thursday—April 15—fishermen are reminded the whelk gauge width is being increased this year. For 2021 and 2022, both knobbed and channeled whelks are to be measured using a chute gauge with an internal width of  $3\frac{1}{8}$ ", length of at least 6", and wall height of at least  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " (Figure 1).

**Fig 1. Chute Gauge Dimensions for 2021 and 2022**



Fishermen are to continue measuring whelks using this chute gauge and the “any orientation” method of measurement (Figure 2). This method of measurement requires fishermen orient the whelk to the chute gauge with its operculum facing down and laying as flat on the gauge as possible.

**Fig 2. Any Orientation Method of Measurement**



If a whelk passes through the chute gauge in this orientation with its siphonal canal at any angle to the gauge’s side walls, then the whelk is considered to be sub-legal sized and must be immediately returned to the water. A video on how to gauge whelks is available on [DMF’s YouTube page](#).

DMF’s recent stock assessment for channeled whelk in Massachusetts demonstrates the resource is overfished with overfishing occurring. In response, in 2019 DMF implemented a 10-year schedule to biennially increase the whelk gauge’s chute size (Table 1) to enhance spawning stock biomass protections. This year’s gauge increase is the second of six steps to accomplish this conservation goal. Size at maturity data demonstrates female channeled whelk in Nantucket Sound—the primary harvest area—do not reach 50% size at maturity until their shell width is  $3\frac{7}{8}$ ". The terminal gauge width in this schedule is  $3\frac{5}{8}$ " corresponding to an animal with a shell width of approximately  $3\frac{7}{8}$ ".

Table 1. 2021-2029 Schedule to Increase Whelk Chute Gauge Width					
	2021	2023	2025	2027	2029
Chute Gauge Width	$3\frac{1}{8}$ "	$3\frac{1}{4}$ "	$3\frac{3}{8}$ "	$3\frac{1}{2}$ "	$3\frac{5}{8}$ "

For more information please visit our website: [www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries).