



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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February 21, 2024

Notice of Public Hearing and Comment Period

Proposals Affecting Recreational and Commercial Trap Fishing: Lobster Carapace Size, V-Notch, Escape Vents, and Trap Tag Rules Under Addendum XXVII; MA Lobster Tracer Buoy Line; and Housekeeping

Under the provisions of G.L. c. 30A and pursuant to the authority found at G.L. c. 130 §§ 17A, 80 and 104, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is taking public comment on a series of proposed regulatory amendments to 322 CMR 6.00 and 12.00. The draft regulations outlined below affect commercial and recreational trap fishers. Full text of the regulations may be found on [DMF's website](#) along with additional relevant background information.

Public Hearing and Comment Schedule

DMF will accept written public comment through 5PM on Friday, April 5, 2024. Please submit written comments to Director Daniel McKiernan by e-mail (marine.fish@mass.gov). Additionally, DMF will host an in-person public hearing.

Friday, March 22, 2024
8:30AM

Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association Annual Weekend
Emerald Resort and Conference Center
35 Scudder Avenue
Hyannis, MA 02601

Proposed Regulatory Amendments

Lobster Carapace Sizes, V-Notch, Escape Vent, and Trap Tag Rules (322 CMR 6.02 and 6.31). To have state regulations conform to Addendum XXVII to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster, DMF is proposing to adopt the following measures:

1. Effective January 1, 2025, increase the minimum carapace size for commercial fishers in Lobster Conservation Management Area 1 (LCMA 1), all seafood dealers in Massachusetts, and recreational fishers in the Gulf of Maine Recreational Area from 3 ¼" to 3 5/16".
2. Effective January 1, 2025, establish a maximum carapace size of 6 ¾" for commercial fishers in the Outer Cape Cod Lobster Conservation Management Area (OCCLCMA), all seafood dealers in Massachusetts, and recreational fishers in Cape Cod Recreational Area.
3. Effective January 1, 2025, reduce the v-notch standard for commercial fishers in the Outer Cape Cod Lobster Conservation Management Area (OCCLCMA) and all seafood dealers in Massachusetts from ¼" to a sharp point with or without setal hairs to 1/8" with or without setal hairs.

4. Effective January 1, 2025, for commercial fishers authorized to fish trap sin LCMA1 and LMCA3, eliminate the allowance for lobster trap tag issuance to exceed trap limits by 10% annually.
5. Effective January 1, 2027, increase the minimum carapace size for commercial fishers in LCMA1, all seafood dealers in Massachusetts, and recreational fishers in the Gulf of Maine Recreational Area from $3 \frac{5}{16}$ " to $3 \frac{3}{8}$ ".
6. Effective January 1, 2028, increase the escape vent minimum size on traps fished by commercial fishers in LCMA) and recreational fishers in the Gulf of Maine Recreational Area from $1 \frac{15}{16}$ " by $5 \frac{3}{4}$ " rectangular or $2 \frac{7}{16}$ " diameter to 2" by $5 \frac{3}{4}$ " rectangular to $2 \frac{5}{8}$ " diameter.
7. Effective January 1, 2029, decrease the maximum carapace size for commercial fishers in OCCLMCA and LCMA3, all seafood dealers in Massachusetts, and recreational fishers in Cape Cod Recreational Area from $6 \frac{3}{4}$ " to $6 \frac{1}{2}$ ".
8. During any year when a carapace size standard or v-notch standard for a seafood dealer is amended, there will be a grace period from January 1 – March 31 for that dealer to possess and sell off any non-conforming inventory that was purchased prior to December 31 of the year preceding.

Weak Rope with Tracer (322 CMR 12.06). DMF proposes to allow the use of full formed red weak rope with a visible "MASS LOBSTER" tracer throughout the buoy line in Massachusetts Mixed Species Pot/Trap Fisheries (i.e. state waters trap/pot fisheries for lobster, scup, black sea bass and whelk) as a means of complying with existing buoy line breaking strength and buoy line marking requirements.

Housekeeping (322 CMR 6.12 and 12.00). DMF proposes to:

1. To correct remnant black sea bass pot closed season regulations that have become out-of-phase with the black sea bass pot directed fishing season regulations.
2. Strike references to the federal "Massachusetts Restricted Area" in state regulations.