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Update on Efforts to Limit Access to the Commercial Striped Bass Fishery

To preserve commercial fishing opportunities for existing participants amidst current and forecasted stock conditions and to prepare for the implementation of a commercial harvester tagging program by 2029, DMF has implemented final regulations to limit access to the commercial striped bass fishery this year.

This action makes permanent certain aspects of the emergency regulations adopted in late-2025 (see [Advisory](#)). For 2026, DMF will only issue commercial striped bass permits to those individuals who held the permit in 2024 or 2025 and applied to obtain the permit by the last day of February 2026. Additionally, these permits will not be transferable between permit holders. Lastly, the control date for the striped bass permit has been updated from June 14, 2022 to December 31, 2025.

Unlike the emergency regulations, the final regulations do not include an owner-operator requirement for the commercial striped bass permit. An owner-operator provision would have required the named permit holder to be onboard the vessel when commercial striped bass fishing is occurring. This was initially included in the emergency action to prevent the activation of latent fishing effort and enhance enforcement and compliance. However, it was removed from the final rule in response to public comment which surfaced a variety of common fishing arrangements that it would have precluded. DMF may reconsider this provision in future rule making.

Moving forward, DMF will continue to address access to the commercial striped bass fishery and there will be additional opportunities to engage with the agency on this subject. Later this year, DMF anticipates proposing the use of fishing activity thresholds prior to the December 31, 2025 control date to further constrain access to this fishery to ensure the agency is capable of administering a harvester tagging program. Please note that any fishing activity that transpires this year will not be considered part of the permit holder's fishing history under any future proposals to further restrict permit issuance as it will have occurred after the cut-off established by the December 31, 2025 control date. Additionally, DMF is working towards developing a program to admit new entrants to the fishery as permits are retired. Such an approach would serve as an alternative to more traditional limited entry permit transfer programs, with the intent of maintaining a lower barrier to entry consistent with this fishery being a small-scale, entry-level commercial fishery.

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