



Paul J. Diodati
Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Marine Fisheries
251 Causeway Street, Suite 400
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626.1520
Fax (617) 626.1509



March 19, 2007

Marine Fisheries Advisory

**MASSACHUSETTS MARINE FISHERIES ADVISORY COMMISSION
APPROVES NEW REGULATIONS**

At a March 15 th business meeting the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFC) took action on several proposed rule changes affecting 1) mobile gear fishery for squid, 2) commercial tautog fishery, 3) recreational summer flounder (fluke) fishery, and 4) commercial spiny dogfish fishery. Additionally, the MFC supported the Division's decision to disapprove a public petition to ban gillnetting from state waters.

1. Squid trawlers granted access from May 1 - 8 in near-shore waters in the vicinity of Collier's Ledge .

The MFC enacted an exemption to a seasonal mobile gear closure for squid trawlers providing extended access to productive fishing grounds off Barnstable . The Commission approved an eight day exemption in waters from shore out to three miles extending from Succunneset Shoal in Mashpee to Pt. Gamon in Yarmouth (see map). At the start of the squid fishery season, this area is routinely fished by trawlers from April 23 rd to April 30 until the area is normally closed on May 1 through October by a longstanding three mile closure that extends from Mashpee east to Chatham . Trawler fishermen, especially, those with smaller vessels, requested fifteen additional days of access to capitalize on early May squid aggregations that are found close to shore. The Commission did not grant the requested 15 days, but opted to grant eight days (May 1-8).



2.

3. **Tautog commercial quota established and commercial seasons modified.**

In an ongoing effort to conserve and rebuild local tautog stocks, the Commission approved a Division of Marine Fisheries recommendation to establish a 96,000 lb. commercial tautog quota. In prior years, the commercial fishery was not capped by a quota.

DMF will monitor the landings and cap the spring fishery (April 16 – May 15) to 26,900 lbs. (28% of the total). The summer/fall season was modified to September 1 – November 30 (previously July 11 - October 31) and will receive the remainder of the quota. DMF and the Commission anticipate additional work over the next year to further conserve tautog to meet rebuilding targets of the interstate management plan. No modifications were made to the recreational tautog fishery at this time.

4. **Recreational summer flounder (fluke) season and bag limit amended.**

To meet the interstate management plan's mandated landings cut of 36%, the Commission approved the DMF recommendation to lower the catch limit of fluke from 7 to 5 fish per angler and establish an open fishing season of June 10 through August 15. The minimum size limit of 17 ½" remains the same. No modifications were made to the commercial fluke fishery rules. The 2007 commercial quota was already lowered by 36% for 2007.

5. **Commercial spiny dogfish trip limit set at 2,000-lbs for 2007-2008.**

Beginning May 1, the spiny dogfish daily limit shall be 2,000 lbs. This trip limit will remain in effect until DMF determines 58% of the annual ASMFC approved regional quota of 6-million lbs. has been reached. Note: this limit applies to permit holders who do not possess federal permits. The federal trip limit remains unchanged at 600-lbs. and applies to any vessel that holds a federal permit for spiny dogfish. When 58% of the interstate plan quota is reached, and DMF closes the fishery – all landings of dogfish (by state and federal permit holders) will be prohibited through the end of the fishing year.

6. **The MFC disapproved a public petition to ban gillnetting in state waters.**

The Commission agreed with DMF's recommendation to disapprove a public petition heard last spring to ban gillnets in state waters, however, DMF will propose amendments to current gillnet regulations at future hearings. Future amendments may include - but not be limited to - limits on the maximum number of nets fished, tagging of nets, new surface system marking requirements, soak time limits, and reduced catch limits for some species.