



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

251 Causeway Street, Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114
p: (617) 626-1520 | f: (617) 626-1509
www.mass.gov/marinefisheries



CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO
Lt. Governor

KATHLEEN A. THEOHARIDES
Secretary

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Commissioner

DANIEL J. MCKIERNAN
Director

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

DMF to Temporarily Lift the Massachusetts Bay Commercial Groundfish Closure for April 2021

For 2021, DMF is taking action to temporarily lift the conditional April commercial groundfish closure in certain waters of Massachusetts Bay between Plymouth (42°00'N) and Marblehead (42°30'N) for mobile gear and actively tended hook gear. Fixed gear such as gillnets and longlines set overnight will be prohibited. Continuing to prohibit the use of these passively fished fixed gears will eliminate the risk of an endangered right whale potentially becoming entangled in the gear, as right whales have been observed in Massachusetts Bay during April in recent years. This action was approved by the Massachusetts' Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission at their March 18, 2021 business meeting and is being implemented by [permit condition](#) pursuant to the Director's declaratory authority ([Legal Notice](#)).

DMF established this conditional April commercial groundfish closure in 2019 to serve as a catch accounting fail-safe at the end of the federal fishing year (May 1 – April 30) to prevent the state waters fishery from causing overages of federally set catch limits. Accordingly, DMF may annually lift the closure based upon a determination of underutilization. DMF's [analysis](#) for the current fishing year (May 1, 2020 – April 30, 2021) indicates that the closure may be lifted for April 2021. DMF similarly lifted the conditional April closure in each of the last two years.

The conditional April commercial groundfish closure was not designed to provide direct groundfish conservation or spawning protection; DMF has other overarching rules to address these management concerns, including species specific trip limits, spawning closures, and mobile gear closures. The lifting of the April conditional closure will not provide groundfish fishing access within such existing closed areas. The February 1 – May 31 [winter flounder spawning closure](#) throughout the inshore waters north of Cape Cod and the April 16 – July 21 [spring cod spawning conservation zone](#) off Marblehead will remain in place. Additionally, mobile gear fishing remains restricted in April within certain waters off [Boston](#) and the [North Shore](#). DMF has published maps on its website depicting how these various closures interact and where groundfish fishing may occur during April with [mobile gear](#) and actively tended [hook gear](#).

For more information regarding the management of marine fisheries in the Commonwealth please visit our website: www.mass.gov/marinefisheries