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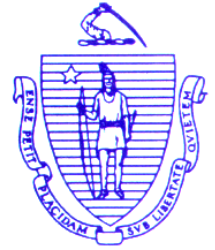
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April 16, 2020

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Changes to Menhaden and Sand Lance Bait Fishery Limits for 2020

On April 1, 2020, the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission approved DMF recommendations to adjust the commercial menhaden limits and adopt a sand lance possession limit. The following changes will take effect on May 1 and are described in more detail below.

Menhaden

The commercial limited entry menhaden fishery is managed by trip limits that are reduced when a certain percentage of the quota is taken. Prior to this year's rule change, the trip limit would start at 125,000 pounds, drop to 25,000 pounds at 85% quota use; and 6,000 pounds at 95% quota use. This management structure, specifically the 6,000-pound trip limit at 95% quota use, has prevented the state from harvesting 100% of its available menhaden quota in recent years. To enhance access to the available quota, the 95% quota trigger has been rescinded and the 25,000-pound trip limit will now remain in effect until 100% of the quota is taken.

With the increased likelihood that the state's commercial fishery will take 100% of the available commercial quota, DMF has also adopted regulations to allow the state to apply to participate in the Episodic Event Set-Aside (EESA), as allowed under the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's interstate management plan for menhaden. The EESA is a set-aside of 1% of the coastwide quota for the northeast states (ME-NY) if they take their state allocated commercial quota by September 1. If Massachusetts were to participate in the EESA fishery, limited entry commercial menhaden permit holders would be allowed to continue to fish in state-waters under a 120,000-pound trip limit until the cumulative effort of all participating states exhausts the available quota set-aside.

DMF has also amended its allowance for harvest after the state's allocated quota is used. The incidental catch and small scale fishery allowance allows commercial fishermen to fish at a 6,000-pound trip limit once 100% of the quota is taken, provided any purse seines used do not measure 150 fathoms in length and 8 fathoms in depth or greater. This is consistent with what is now allowed by the interstate management plan. This replaces DMF's prior bycatch allowance, which was more restrictive and allowed for only an incidental catch of up to 1,000 pounds of menhaden provided the menhaden catch did not exceed 5% the weight of the entire catch.

Lastly, DMF has established that the limited entry commercial menhaden fishery is an owner-operator fishery. This requires the individual named on the commercial permit be onboard the vessel when any commercial menhaden fishing activity is occurring. This action is designed to enhance compliance and address concerns regarding the activation of latent effort. Also, while a May 1, 2020 control date for the limited entry menhaden permit endorsement was proposed in the draft regulations, it is not being adopted as a final regulation.

Sand Lance

Sand lance has been an unregulated species in Massachusetts. The new 200-pound trip limit is designed to prevent the proliferation of an industrial scale bait or reduction fishery on this important nearshore forage species. This limit will continue to accommodate any small-scale commercial or personal bait harvesting activity that may be occurring with beach seines or other similar artisanal gear.

For more information, please visit our website:

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