



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

New Rules Effecting Filleting of Striped Bass in the Recreational Fishery

Effective May 1, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is updating state rules concerning at-sea and shore-side filleting of recreationally caught striped bass to clarify current possession standards and reflect new interstate management requirements. The relevant rules have and will continue to differ by recreational fishing mode. These changes more clearly define the state's no-filleting rule for striped bass caught by anglers fishing from shore or a private vessel, and revise the conditions associated with the state's allowance for for-hire vessel operators to fillet striped bass for their customers.

First, these changes clarify that striped bass retained in the shore or private vessel recreational modes are to be kept whole—except for evisceration, bleeding, or descaling—while on the waters of this state or any adjacent parcel of land, structure, portion of roadway, or parking lot. An exception is granted for striped bass being prepared for immediate consumption, such as on the private vessel or at the shore-side campground from which a fish was caught. The prior regulatory language had a history of being misinterpreted and did not address at what point retained striped bass may be legally processed.

Second, these changes modify the existing for-hire filleting allowance in several ways, most notably with a rack retention provision required by Addendum II to the Atlantic Striped Bass Interstate Fishery Management Plan. This Addendum established new standards for states that allow filleting in their recreational striped bass fishery to enhance compliance and enforcement with size and possession limits. Accordingly, the racks (i.e., carcasses) of striped bass filleting by for-hire operators for their customers must now be retained in a manner that does not interfere with species identification or total length measurement until such time as the vessel has docked and all customers from that trip have departed the vessel. The racks may subsequently be disposed of in any legal manner. Two other conditions for the for-hire filleting allowance have been eased: (1) filleting may now occur at any time during the for-hire trip prior to the customers departing the vessel; and (2) the fillets may now be skinned provided at least two square inches of skin is left intact. DMF is retaining the requirement that no more than two fillets, representing the equivalent of one fish, may be possessed by each customer; this is now a requirement of the interstate management plan.

Due to the May 1, 2024 deadline for states to implement Addendum II, DMF is implementing these regulations by emergency action; final rulemaking will follow this summer to make them permanent. The strikethrough text implementing these emergency regulations may be found [here](#) and the full text of Massachusetts' striped bass regulations may be found at 322 CMR 6.07.

For more information, please visit: www.mass.gov/marinefisheries