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Marine Fisheries Advisory

DMF to Renew Pilot Program Allowing Trawlers in State Waters Groundfish Fishery to Land Consecutive Daily Limits of Flounder Species

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is renewing a pilot program for the upcoming fishing year (May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027) that will allow commercial trawlers participating in the state-waters-only groundfish fishery to land two daily limits of winter flounder and yellowtail flounder that were lawfully caught and retained over consecutive calendar days. The purpose of this pilot program is to enhance flexibility and safety for these small-scale trawlers given the high cost of fuel and the long-distance vessels must travel between port and the fishing grounds, as well as the constraining impacts seasonal weather and the night closure have on this fleet.

This pilot program is modeled after the program that DMF has authorized since 2019 for the summertime mixed species trawl fishery south and west of Cape Cod. Participating vessels will be issued a Letter of Authorization. During any two-day trip, the commercial fisher will be required to: (1) retain no more than a single trip limit of winter flounder and yellowtail flounder during any single calendar day; (2) segregate first day's catch of winter flounder and yellowtail flounder from the second day's catch in a manner which it is clearly identifiable and labeled; and (3) maintain a logbook documenting each days catch to be presented to enforcement for inspection upon request.

To be eligible to participate in this program the commercial fisher must hold a Coastal Access Permit and a State Waters Groundfish Endorsement. To apply, please provide the following information to Bradlie Morgan by email (bradlie.morgan@mass.gov): (1) Permit Holder Name; (2) DMF Permit ID#; and (3) Vessel Name. DMF will begin to review and process these applications upon receipt and applicants will receive their Letter of Authorization shortly thereafter.

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