



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENT PERIOD: RECREATIONAL FISHING RULES FOR 2024 AFFECTING FISHING LIMITS FOR BLACK SEA BASS, SCUP, SUMMER FLOUNDER, COD, AND HADDOCK AND THE FILLETING OF STRIPED BASS

Pursuant to the authority found at G.L. c. 30A, §2 and G.L. c. 130, §§17, 17A, 21, and 104, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is taking public comment on a series of recently adopted emergency regulations and draft regulatory proposals to adjust recreational fishing rules at 322 CMR 6.00.

Striped Bass (322 CMR 6.07). DMF seeks public comment on emergency regulations that update state rules governing the at-sea and shore-side filleting of recreational striped bass for improved enforceability and consistency with recent revisions to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan. This includes:

1. Clarifying that striped bass retained by shore anglers or anglers onboard a private vessel are to be kept whole with head and tail intact—except for evisceration (gutting), bleeding, or scaling—while on the waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth or any adjacent parcel of land, structure, parking lot, or portion of roadway. An exemption is being accommodated for striped bass that are being processed for immediate consumption (e.g., cooking at a shore-side camp).
2. Modifying the existing for-hire filleting allowance so for-hire operators or crew may fillet striped bass for their patrons provided: (a) filleting occurs prior to the patrons departing the vessel; (b) the racks are retained by the for-hire operator in a manner that does not interfere with measurement until such a time as the vessel has docked and all customers from that trip have departed the vessel; and (c) no more than two fillets per customer are possessed and each fillet has at least two inches of skin intact.

Summer Flounder Limits (322 CMR 6.22). DMF seeks public comment on emergency regulations that set the 2024 and 2025 recreational summer flounder limits as necessary to achieve an Interstate Fishery Management Plan mandated 28% reduction in harvest. This results in an open fishing season of May 24 – September 23 and a 5-fish bag limit for all angler modes. The minimum size is 17.5” for vessel-based anglers and 16.5” for shore-based anglers.

Scup Limits (322 CMR 6.27). DMF seeks public comment on emergency regulations that set the 2024 and 2025 recreational scup limits as necessary to achieve an Interstate Fishery Management Plan mandated 10% reduction in harvest. This results in an open fishing season of May 1 – December 31 for all angler modes. The bag limit is 30-fish per angler, except anglers onboard for-hire vessels may retain 40-fish each during May 1 – June 30 and anglers onboard private vessels are subject to a 150-fish vessel limit if five or more anglers are fishing. The minimum size is 11” for vessel-based anglers and 9.5” for shore anglers.

Black Sea Bass (322 CMR 6.28). DMF seeks public comment on emergency regulations that set the 2024 recreational black sea bass limits to allow the fishery to continue to open on the third Saturday of May (without increasing projected harvest, as mandated by the Interstate Fishery Management Plan). This

results in a May 18 – September 3 open fishing season, 4-fish bag limit, and 16.5” minimum size for all angler modes.

Gulf of Maine Cod (322 CMR 6.03). DMF seeks public comment on draft regulations to match final federal regulations for 2024. At present, the New England Fishery Management Council has recommended NOAA Fisheries adopt an open season of September 1 – October 31 with a 1-fish bag limit, and a 23” minimum size for all angler modes.

Gulf of Maine Haddock (322 CMR 6.03). DMF seeks public comment on draft regulations to match final federal regulations for 2024. At present, the New England Fishery Management Council has recommended NOAA Fisheries adopt an open season of April 1 – February 28 with a 15-fish bag limit, and an 18” minimum size for all angler modes.

A public hearing has been scheduled for Monday, May 20, 2024 at 6PM via Zoom. Please register [here](#). Additionally, DMF will accept written public comment through 8PM on Monday, May 20, 2024. Please submit written comments to Director Daniel McKiernan by e-mail (marine.fish@mass.gov). For more information, please visit our proposed regulations [website](#).