



# 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



MAURA T. HEALEY  
Governor

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL  
Lt. Governor

REBECCA L. TEPPER  
Secretary

RONALD S. AMIDON  
Commissioner

DANIEL J. MCKIERNAN  
Director

April 27, 2023

### Marine Fisheries Advisory

## **Update on Recreational Cod and Haddock Measures – Federally Proposed Measures and Comment Period Ongoing through May 3rd**

### Update on Status of FY23 Recreational Fishing Limits

NOAA Fisheries is currently conducting a public comment period on proposed recreational Gulf of Maine cod and haddock and Georges Bank cod fishing limits for the upcoming federal fishing year of May 1, 2023 – April 30, 2024. Given the federal public comment period is ongoing, new federal rules will not be in effect for the start of the fishing year on May 1. Accordingly, status quo rules (Table 1) will remain in place during the interim period between May 1, 2023 and when final federal regulations are implemented later this spring or early-summer. Effectively, this means the Gulf of Maine haddock fishery will be open with a 20-fish bag and 17” minimum size and retention of cod in the Gulf of Maine cod and Georges Bank cod will be prohibited.

**Table 1. Status Quo Recreational Cod and Haddock Limits**

Stock	Mode	Open Season	Bag Limit	Size Limit
Gulf of Maine Cod	All Anglers	April 1 – April 14 September 1 – October 7	1 fish	22”
Georges Bank Cod	All Anglers	August 1 – April 30	5 fish	22” to <= 28”
Gulf of Maine Haddock	All Anglers	May 1 – February 28 April 1 – April 30	20-fish	17”

DMF intends to adopt complementary limits once federal rules are finalized. This will be done to ensure state rules do not undermine federal conservation and management objectives; fish lawfully caught in the federal zone may be possessed and landed in Massachusetts; and recreational fishers in state waters are afforded the same opportunities as those fishing in adjacent federal waters.

### Summary of Proposed Federal Limits

On April 18, NOAA Fisheries published its proposed recreational fishing regulations for cod and haddock in the [Federal Register](#). The public comment period remains open through 5PM on Wednesday, May 1. To submit comments electronically, visit their [website](#); enter “NOAA-NMFS-2023-0054” in the search box; click on “Comment” icon; and enter or attach your comments. The proposed changes are described in the Table 2 below.

**Table 2. FY23 Recreational Cod and Haddock Limits Proposed by NOAA Fisheries**

Stock	Mode	Open Season	Bag Limit	Size Limit
Gulf of Maine Cod	All Anglers	<b>September 1 – October 31</b> <del>April 1 – April 14</del> <del>September 1 – October 7</del>	1 fish	22"
Georges Bank Cod	All Anglers	<b>May 1 – May 31</b> <b>September 1 – April 30</b> <del>August 1 – August 30</del>	5 fish	<b>23"</b> <del>22" to &lt;= 28"</del>
Gulf of Maine Haddock	Private Anglers	May 1 – February 28 April 1 – April 30	<b>10 fish</b> <del>20 fish</del>	17"
	For Hire	May 1 – February 28 April 1 – April 30	<b>15 fish</b> <del>20 fish</del>	<b>18"</b> <del>17"</del>

At its January business meeting, the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) recommended changes to recreational fishing limits for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock and Georges Bank cod for NOAA Fisheries consideration. These see changes are described in detail in the NEFMC’s February 7, 2023 [press release](#). The intended purpose of these changes is to achieve but not exceed the sub-annual catch limit (sub-ACL) for each stock. NOAA Fisheries is now proposing to adopt the limits recommended by the NEFMC for Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank cod, however, the agency is proposing to deviate from the NEFMC recommendation for Gulf of Maine haddock.

Regarding Gulf of Maine haddock, NOAA Fisheries has expressed concern that the NEFMC recommendation—which would have reduced the bag limit by 5-fish (from 20-fish to 15-fish) and increased the minimum size by 1” (from 17” to 18”) for all anglers—would lead to decreased retention and increased discarding. Specifically, the NEFMC’S Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP) opined this decreased retention and increased discarding may be most pronounced among the private angler mode who may encounter smaller-sized fish while fishing closer to shore. NOAA Fisheries also recognize the NEFMC recommended measures may benefit the for-hire industry who rely on higher bag limits to preserve bookings and may be able to effectively target larger-sized haddock further offshore. Accordingly, the agency proposed a split-mode option whereby the for-hire fleet will be subject to the NEFMC recommended measures and private anglers will maintain a lower minimum size (17”) but be subject to a reduced bag limit (10-fish).

Refer to the DMF website for a full list of 2023 recreational saltwater fishing regulations:  
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/recreational-saltwater-fishing-regulations>