



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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### Marine Fisheries Advisory

#### **POSSESSION, SALE, AND USE OF PACIFIC LUGWORMS AS BAIT IS PROHIBITED**

The Division of Marine Fisheries has prohibited the sale, possession, and use of Pacific lugworms (*Perinereis aibuhitensis*) as bait. Over the past few years there have been reports of Pacific lugworms being sold at local bait and tackle shops and acquired by anglers through online purchases. This is consistent with what has also been observed in other northeast states and it has prompted bio-security concerns related to both pathogen transmission and this species becoming naturalized.

In response, in 2024, the State of Maine conducted a [risk analysis](#) on this species. This report concluded that the introduction of this species poses a risk of pathogen transmission. Specifically, White Spot Syndrome Virus capable of infecting crustaceans, potentially including lobsters, and Convert Mortality Nodavirus capable of infecting a variety of shellfish, crustaceans, and finfish. The report also concluded that there is a moderately low chance of this species becoming naturalized in Maine given the difference in the temperature regimes between the sub-tropical climate where it naturally exists and their near coastal waters. However, Massachusetts inshore waters and mudflats do experience temperatures within the favorable temperature regime (71°F - 77°F) and the periods when these temperatures are being experienced have been increasing.

Based on Maine's risk analysis, DMF determined it was appropriate to use its regulatory authority to restrict the possession and sale of this species by bait dealers and the possession and use of this species by all fishers. DMF recognizes that it is difficult to visually differentiate marine worm species. Anglers should be careful about the source of any marine worm species they obtain as bait. In fact, this is true of all bait, not just marine worms because of biosecurity issues related to introducing non-native species into our marine environment. Accordingly, DMF strongly encourages anglers to obtain and use only native baits or species that have unfortunately already become naturalized locally (e.g., green crabs).

For more information, please visit our website: [www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries).