



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission May 21, 2024 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the May 21, 2024 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This business meeting was held virtually via Zoom. All meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#) and the meeting recording has been published to [DMF's YouTube Channel](#). The MFAC will meet again on June 18, 2024 at DMF's Cat Cove Marine Laboratory in Salem, MA. Please check the [MFAC's website](#) for additional information.

Action Items

The MFAC reviewed and voted on three final recommendations from the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) related to recreational fishing:

1. Recreational Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Limits. The MFAC approved DMF's recommendation to adopt as final regulations the limits that were previously established on May 1 on an emergency basis for the 2024 fishing season. See Table 1 below.

Table 1. Recommended Final Rules - Recreational Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

	Mode	Open Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
Summer Flounder (2024/25)	Private Vessel & For-hire Vessel	May 21–Sept 29	5 fish	16.5" 17.5"
	Shore	May 24 – Sept 23		16.5"
Scup (2024/25)	Shore	May 1 – Dec 31	30 fish	9.5"
	Private Vessel			10.5" 11"
	For-hire Vessel	May 1 – June 30	40 fish	10.5"
		July 1 – Dec 31	30 fish	11"
Black Sea Bass (2024)	All Modes	May 20–Sept 7 May 18 – Sept 3	4 fish	16.5"

2. Recreational Filleting of Striped Bass. The MFAC approved DMF's final recommendation regarding the recreational filleting of striped bass. The approved recommendation requires recreationally harvested striped bass remain whole, with head and tail intact, until reaching the fishers place of residence except that lawfully caught fish may be: (1) eviscerated, bled, and descaled while at sea or shoreside; (2) filleted at-sea for immediate consumption after the conclusion of fishing, including the stowage of gear; (3) filleted shoreside after the conclusion of vessel or shore-based fishing, including the stowage of gear, provided no more than two filets are possessed, each with a minimum two-square-inch patch of skin intact, and no fishing occurs when in possession of filets; and (4) filleted onboard for-hire vessels by captain/crew for their customers, provided no more than two filets are possessed, each with a minimum two-square-inch patch of skin intact, and the racks are retained in a measurable manner until the vessel has docked and the customers have departed. This differs from the emergency regulation implemented for May 1, 2024 in that the third exception listed here is not currently authorized

by the emergency rule. The final regulation will go into effect later this summer and will replace the emergency rule.

3. Recreational Gulf of Maine Cod and Haddock. The MFAC approved DMF’s final recommendation to adopt recreational fishing limits for state waters to complement pending final federal rules. On May 17, 2024, NOAA Fisheries published a draft rule proposing to adopt the New England Fishery Management Council’s preferred measures for the current fishing year (Table 2). DMF anticipates NOAA Fisheries will promulgate these limits final rules in early-June 2024 and DMF will concurrently implement complementary state rules.

Table 2. NOAA Fisheries’ Draft Rules for Recreational Gulf of Maine Cod and Haddock Limits

Stock	Mode	Open Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
GOM Cod	All Anglers	Sept 1 – Oct 31	1 fish	22” 23”
GOM Haddock	All Anglers For-Hire	May 1 – Feb 28 Apr 1 – Apr 30	15 fish	18”
	Private Anglers	May 1 – Feb 28 Apr 1 – Apr 30	10 fish	17”

Future Public Hearings

Prohibit Retention of Oceanic Whitetip Sharks. DMF informed the MFAC that draft regulations would be developed to place oceanic whitetip sharks on the prohibited species list consistent with a recent action taken by NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Coastal Shark Board. This will be packaged as part of a broader public hearing docket for late-2024 or early-2025.

Discussion Items and Program Updates

Interstate Fisheries Management Update. DMF briefed the MFAC on the recent spring meeting of the ASMFC. The American Lobster board met to: (1) consider a Technical Committee report regarding the implications of a proposed New England Fishery Management Council action to open Closed Area II on the northern edge of Georges Bank; (2) review work by the Plan Development Team to evaluate alternative measures to a trap caps for Lobster Management Area 3; (3) discuss international efforts to have Canada adopt complementary gauge sizes for their Gulf of Maine lobster fishery; and (4) receive an update on the lawsuit in Maine regarding the implementation of the ASMFC’s vessel tracker rule. The Striped Bass Board developed a working group to focus on reducing recreational release mortality. The next stock assessment will be reviewed this fall and if there is less than a 50% chance that striped bass will not be rebuilt by 2029 then the Board can act by specification to reduce mortality. The American Eel Board approved Addendum VI to set the glass eel quota for Maine and Addendum VII to address yellow eel harvest and fishing mortality through quotas and a coastwide cap. DMF’s Deputy Director Mike Armstrong received the ASMFC’s Hart Award for his contributions to management and science. Lastly, the ASMFC was currently reviewing two requests from DMF regarding adding both smooth dogfish and winter flounder to existing consecutive daily trip limit programs.

Adjudicatory Hearing Updates. DMF provided the MFAC with an update on the administrative actions take by the agency to suspend or revoke permits since 2022.

Horseshoe Crab Stock Assessment. DMF provided the MFAC with an overview of the most recent 2024 horseshoe crab benchmark stock assessment. The stock status coastwide has improved from neutral to good since the last benchmark stock assessment in 2019. At a regional level, the Delaware Bay improved

from neutral to good compared to the 2019 benchmark assessment while the status of the other regions (Northeast, neutral; New York, poor; Southeast, good) remained unchanged from 2019.