



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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May 22, 2023

### Marine Fisheries Advisory

## **Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission Approves New Rules for Commercial Summer Flounder Fishery**

On May 16, 2023, the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) met and reviewed [recommendations](#) from the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) regarding the management of the state's commercial summer flounder fishery. The recommendations approved by the MFAC are described below. DMF anticipates these changes will go into effect during the 2023 fishing season, likely by late June or early July. When implementation is imminent, DMF will send out another notification to inform the public about when these rules will go into effect. Concurrently, DMF will also update its commercial fishing regulations [webpage](#). During the interim, status quo rules will remain in effect.

For Period I (January 1 – April 22), the MFAC approved increasing the trip limit from 3,000 pounds to 10,000 pounds for all gear types. The intent of this elevated trip limit is to allow and encourage vessels harvesting summer flounder in federal waters to land in Massachusetts' ports and avoid longer steams to other states to offload. This is also to the benefit of the Massachusetts seafood dealers who are able to purchase this fish.

For the Summertime Period II fishery (April 23 – September 30), the MFAC approved changes to the trip limits during the period of April 23 – August 31. For net fishers, the trip limit is increasing from 500 pounds to 600 pounds and for hook fishers it is increasing from 300 pounds to 400 pounds. This is designed to provide our summertime inshore fishery with additional access to available quota. The MFAC did not support changing the September trip limits, which means there will be an 800-pound trip limit for all gear types if more than 20% of the quota remains on August 31, otherwise the limits for the April 23 – August 31 season will remain in place.

For the Fall Period II fishery (October 1 – December 31), the MFAC approved increasing the trip limit from 3,000 pounds to 10,000 pounds provided more than 5% of the quota remains on September 30. If less than 5% of the quota remains on September 30, then the trip limit will be 800 pounds for this season. Similar to the adjustments approved for the Period I fishery, this will enhance the ability for offshore boats to land available summer flounder in Massachusetts and support utilization of our available quota.

The MFAC approved extending the summer flounder landing window from 6AM–8PM to 6AM–10PM. This will provide commercial fishers and dealers with additional time to offload and

accept fish, particularly during the summer months when there is substantial congestion around Cape Cod where the fishery predominantly occurs. The MFAC also approved adjusting the small mesh trawl bycatch allowance rule so that it is consistent with the federal fishery management plan.

Lastly, for June 1, 2023, DMF is renewing its pilot program that allows commercial trawlers participating in the summertime trawl fishery for summer flounder to land two days' trip limits of certain species, including summer flounder, that were lawfully caught and retained over consecutive open fishing days. This program is designed to increase regulatory flexibility, enhance economic efficiency, and address fisherman safety issues. To apply, please complete this [application](#) and return it by e-mail to Julia Kaplan ([julia.kaplan@mass.gov](mailto:julia.kaplan@mass.gov)). Once received and processed, applicants will receive their Letter of Authorization, a daily logbook, and sequentially numbered plastic tags for segregating and sealing each day's harvest.

For more information regarding the May 16, 2023 MFAC business meeting, please review the [meeting summary](#).