



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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May 6, 2025

### Marine Fisheries Advisory

#### NEW LIMITS FOR ATLANTIC BONITO AND FALSE ALBACORE

The Division of Marine Fisheries has enacted first-ever size and possession limits for both false albacore (aka little tunny) and Atlantic bonito. The minimum size limit for both species is 16-inches. Additionally, retention is limited to no more than 5-fish per person of both species combined. These new limits apply universally to all persons whether commercially or recreationally fishing. However, commercial weir operators and mechanized mackerel jig fishers who may encounter some bycatch of these fish during their routine operations are exempt from the possession and size limits as sorting and discarding the bycatch would be unduly burdensome.

Fishing for these Atlantic bonito and false albacore is growing in popularity, particularly along Massachusetts' southern coast. Late summer fishing in this area now focuses on these species as they have become more seasonally available while other target species, such as bluefish and striped bass, are not as plentiful locally. In fact, this past year (2024) Atlantic bonito landings in Massachusetts were nearly six-fold times larger than average annual landings over the past decade. The local growth of this fishery is significant and occurring without the benefit of population assessments, extensive understanding of species life history, or fishery management plans to control fishing mortality.

With this in mind, DMF has opted to adopt precautionary management measures for these species until a time when a more robust science and management program is implemented. The new possession limits are designed to constrain recreational harvest approximately at current levels and discourage further expansion while curtailing the development of a directed commercial fishery. This size limit reflects estimated size-at-maturity for both species.

The bycatch exemptions for commercial fish weirs and mechanized mackerel jigging operations will allow these historic large volume commercial fishing activities to continue to function and operate without undue burden and are not expected to contribute significantly to overall harvest or fishing mortality. However, DMF will dedicate staff time to better understand the incidental catch of these species in these gears.

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