



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

PROHIBITION ON USE OF CERTAIN DEVICES TO DEPLOY BAIT WHEN SHORE FISHING

The Division of Marine Fisheries has prohibited anglers from using mechanized, compressed propulsion, and remote-controlled devices to deploy baits when shore fishing. Common devices included in this prohibition are bait cannons, drones, and so-called “rc-boats” (radio or remote controlled boats). Deploying baits with manual devices such as kayaks and kites remains allowed.

The purpose of this action is two-fold. First, it complements DMF’s regulatory actions to restrict the shore-based targeting of white sharks to ameliorate user group conflicts and public safety challenges. By prohibiting the use of these devices when shore fishing, anglers will be constrained in setting bait beyond the surf where white sharks occur, thereby limiting the ability for anglers to target these animals and ameliorating resulting user group and public safety conflicts. Additionally, outside the context of shark-fishing, these devices allow shore-based anglers to target fish at a greater distance and specific size classes of fish when conditions allow. Inevitably, this will increase the frequency that fish are caught, as well as the fight time and stress associated with the catch. Longer fight times and stress can increase post-release mortality, particularly for striped bass, which are a popular species targeted by shore fishers.

The most recent stock assessment demonstrates striped bass are currently overfished. The primary spawning area—the Chesapeake Bay—has also had six consecutive years of poor young-of-the-year production due to environmental and climatic factors. This raises concerns about the status of this resource moving forward as the large year classes supporting the current fishery begin to age out of the population. Further, the stock assessment shows that the recreational fishery is currently responsible for approximately 90% of all striped bass fishing mortality and up to half of this mortality can be attributable to post-release mortality. Managing to constrain post-release mortality is very challenging. To address this, DMF has pursued a multi-faceted approach. This includes regulatory measures—such as this new restriction as well as other existing terminal tackle rules (e.g., mandatory use of circle hooks with whole or cut baits); a recently completed study into the factors that influence post-release mortality through a [Citizen Science effort](#); and angler education, which includes a partnership with On the Water to produce a series of videos to teach anglers how to improve their striped bass fishing from [boats](#), [shore](#), or [kayaks](#) while also increasing the survival of released fish.

For more information, please visit our website: www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.