



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Marine Fisheries
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Marine Fisheries Advisory

DMF Amends Commercial Fishing Rules for Black Sea Bass and Scup

Black Sea Bass

For 2026 and 2027, the state's commercial black sea bass quota will be set at just over 1 million pounds annually. This represents a 30% increase from 2025 and is the result of the resource remaining in strong condition. DMF has made several minor regulatory modifications to support the utilization of the increased quota. These changes primarily focus on the timing of existing in-season adjustments to directed fishing limits for pot and hook-and-line gear so that they occur sooner in the season—on September 1 rather than September 15. This includes increasing trip limits if at least 15% of the quota remains on August 31 and eliminating closed fishing days. Additionally, for 2027, DMF will remove the April 1–April 22 closed season for trawlers, thereby allowing an incidental catch limit of 100 pounds year-round or until 100% of the annual quota is taken and the fishery is closed.

Scup

For scup, the state's summertime (May–September) commercial quota will be roughly 1.49 million pounds in 2026 and 1.31 million pounds in 2027. While this is a small reduction from the 2025 level of 1.64 million pounds, the stock remains highly abundant. Despite a robust stock, the scup quota is routinely underutilized, primarily due to market factors. There was an industry request this spring to increase the commercial scup limits for the directed pot and hook-and-line fisheries for the month of June. DMF supported this request and has adopted implementing regulations. Accordingly, beginning this June, the trip limit for these gears will increase from 400 pounds to 800 pounds and the number of fishing days per week will increase from three (Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday) to five (Sunday through Thursday), thereby matching the commercial limits for these gears during May.

Multi-Day Pilot Program for Pot Fishers

In prior years, DMF has initiated a pilot program for fish potters that allows them to retain two consecutive daily limits of scup and black sea bass taken over a trip spanning two calendar days provided each day's catch is segregated and labeled. This program is designed to improve operational efficiency and quota utilization in balance with season length. DMF will monitor fishery performance and quota use throughout this summer to determine whether this program will be renewed in 2026. If the program is renewed, a notification will be disseminated.

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