



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Marine Fisheries
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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Summertime Commercial Black Sea Bass Fishery to Open on July 1

The summertime commercial fishery for black sea bass opens on Wednesday, July 1. With this opening, rod and reel and pot fishers will be allowed to retain, possess, and land black sea bass subject to the limits described below. Please note that trawlers and weir fishers are not subject to the regulations described below. Instead, they are managed separately with trawlers subject to a year-round incidental catch limit and weir fishers subject to a seasonal quota set-aside.

The fishery begins with five open fishing days per week, running Sundays through Thursdays. Fridays and Saturdays are closed to commercial fishing until September 1 (should quota remain available). The commercial trip limit is permit and gear type specific. Commercial fishers who hold a black sea bass pot endorsement and are taking fish by black sea bass pot are subject to a 500-pound daily trip limit that increases to 600 pounds on September 1 if at least 15% of the quota remains. For black sea bass endorsement holders who are fishing with rod and reel gear or retaining fish caught as bycatch in other pot gear, the daily trip limit begins at 250 pounds and similarly increases to 300 pounds on September 1 if at least 15% of the quota remains. The commercial minimum size is 12 inches as measured on the fish with its mouth closed from the anterior most tip of the jaw or snout in a straight line to the furthest extremity of the tail except for any tail tendril.

For 2026, the annual commercial black sea bass quota is 1.036 million pounds. This represents a near 30% increase in available quota compared to 2025 given the overall health and biomass of the black sea bass population. At present, about 99% of Massachusetts' quota remains available after accounting for incidental catch in trawl fisheries and weir catch this year.

Consecutive Daily Trip Limit Pilot Program for Fish Pot Fishers

Given this high level of quota availability, DMF will initiate the Consecutive Daily Trip Limit Pilot Program for Fish Potters on July 1. This program allows fish potters to possess and land consecutive daily trip limits of fish lawfully caught and retained over two consecutive open fishing days provided each day's catch is segregated and tagged. This program is designed to increase fleet efficiency and reduce fuel usage.

To be eligible to participate, the permit holder must: (1) hold a valid Fish Pot – Scup or Fish Pot – Sea Bass regulated fishery permit endorsement; and (2) have a clean enforcement record over the past calendar year. To apply please e-mail Bradlie Morgan (bradlie.morgan@mass.gov) and provide the

following information: (1) permit number; (2) permit holder name; (3) vessel name; and (4) vessel documentation number. DMF will begin to review and process these applications immediately. Tags and Letters of Authorization can be mailed to the permit holder or picked up at DMF's New Bedford Permitting Office located at 836 S. Rodney French Blvd.

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