



Paul J. Diodati
Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Marine Fisheries
251 Causeway Street, Suite 400
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626.1520
Fax (617) 626.1509



Deval Patrick
Governor
Ian Bowles
Secretary
Mary B.
Griffin
Commissioner

June 29, 2010

Marine Fisheries Advisory

**The Division of Marine Fisheries EXTENDS SPRING COD
CONSERVATION ZONE CLOSURE UNTIL July 21, 2010**

Based on recent findings of research on local cod spawning aggregations along the north shore, Director Paul Diodati is working to extend, by three-weeks, the two-month spawning closure for the spring cod conservation zone (a discrete area in upper Massachusetts Bay off Manchester). This action will affect both commercial and recreational harvesters.

Throughout May and June surveys of this area found a large aggregation of female cod in pre-spawning and spawning condition. The most recent data (June 22) suggested that this group of cod would continue to be present in the spring cod conservation zone (CCZ) for 3-4 more weeks. Under the current rule this area was to be opened to harvest on July 1 for recreational hook-and-line fishermen and commercial hook-and-line and gillnet fishermen.

For the past decade the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, along with other states and federal partners, have worked to restore and rebuild cod in the Gulf of Maine (GOM). Recent research demonstrates that GOM cod is not one stock, but rather a set of smaller "meta-populations" of discrete spawning groups. Past research on GOM cod has established that some historic Maine spawning populations have practically disappeared, while Massachusetts Bay still holds significant winter and spring spawning aggregations. Subjecting these aggregations to intense fishing pressure can threaten the existence of GOM cod.

This knowledge has changed the approach by which the Commonwealth manages GOM cod; discrete rather than broad area closures are now implemented. In 2005, *Marine Fisheries* first promulgated a seasonal area closure to protect vulnerable aggregations of winter spawning fish in outer Massachusetts Bay. In 2009 a second closure was established to protect the spring

spawning aggregations east of Manchester.

In the southern GOM there are two significant spring spawning aggregations. One is found in the Commonwealth's spring CCZ and the other in "Whaleback," a federal waters area located just south of the Isle of Shoals off the New Hampshire coast. The New England Council is working to adopt a Massachusetts-like approach to protecting the Whaleback spawning aggregation in 2011.

After this 21-day extension of the closure is finalized a public hearing will be held later this summer to accept comments on whether to permanently extend the closure to this later date. For more information, contact DMF at 617 626-1520.