



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Commercial Tautog Tagging Program Update

With the commercial tautog fishery scheduled to open on September 1, 2020, DMF is providing commercial tautog fishermen with an update on the tautog tagging program. DMF will begin to distribute tautog tags to commercial fishermen on August 5, 2020. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this will be done by appointment only through the agency's New Bedford field office (836 S. Rodney French Boulevard). DMF has sent a letter to all commercial tautog permit holders with additional details regarding how to schedule an appointment to pick up their tags. Please note that all DMF offices are closed to the public so it is very important to call ahead for pickup instructions. If you hold a commercial tautog endorsement, please be on the lookout for these letters over the next several days.

Any commercial tautog fisherman who opts to receive tags will be responsible for returning all unused tags at the end of the season and completing a tag accounting report. All unused tags are to be returned to DMF, within two weeks of notification following the end of the commercial fishing season, with a harvester tag accounting report, provided by DMF, documenting tags issued, tags used, tags lost, and tags returned. Failure to comply with this requirement could jeopardize future participation in the fishery.

Commercial tautog fishermen are required to obtain their own tag applicator. If you have not already obtained a tag applicator, you can purchase one (Style 681S-MOD) from National Band & Tag Company at <https://www.nationalband.com/asmfc-tautog-tag-applicator/> or by calling 859-261-2035. The order form can also be downloaded [here](#).

In 2019, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) approved Amendment 1 to its Tautog Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This action requires all coastal states with a commercial tautog fishery – including Massachusetts – to implement a harvester tagging program for 2020. The purpose of this program is to require all fish in commerce be tagged to reduce poaching coast-wide. Accordingly, commercial fishermen will now be required to tag their commercial catch through the operculum (see image) prior to offloading the fish from the fishing vessel and selling the fish into commerce. The tautog tags are single use metal tags inscribed with the calendar year, state of issuance, and sequential tag number.



Dealers and seafood purveyors will be prohibited from purchasing any tautog or portions thereof that do not bear a tag from the state of harvest. Whole tautog, whether live or dead, are to be tagged through the operculum. If the tautog is processed into fillets, the tag is to be cut out of the operculum and remain with

the fillet until all portions are sold. Primary buyers are to liquidate their supply of Massachusetts tagged tautog within two-weeks of the end of the commercial fishing season. Tags expire at the end of the calendar year and dealers may not acquire any tautog from any jurisdiction bearing an expired tag. Any fish in the possession of dealers or seafood purveyors with a tag from the prior calendar year may only be sold to an end consumer and all such tautog must be sold off or disposed of by February 28.

For more information regarding the management of marine fisheries in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, please visit our website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries