



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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July 30, 2021

Marine Fisheries Advisory

PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT ON IN-SEASON ADJUSTMENTS TO COMMERCIAL BLACK SEA BASS FISHING LIMITS FOR 2021

In response to fishery performance and quota utilization so far in 2021, DMF is proposing in-season adjustments to 2021 commercial fishing limits for black sea bass. As of July 25, 2021, Massachusetts has landed 128,000 pounds of its 791,000-pound 2021 quota (16%). This is similar to the state's quota utilization at this point in 2020 (14.1%). In 2020, DMF increased the number of fishing days per week and the trip limits on August 31 and again on October 2 (see [Notice](#)); the 2020 annual quota was taken on November 5 and the fishery closed effective November 6. DMF is seeking to take a similar action this year and is proposing the following in-season adjustments for 2021:

- **Open Fishing Days.** Effective August 30, 2021, increase the number of open fishing days per week from three (Sunday/Tuesday/Thursday) to five (Sunday – Thursday). Then effective October 1, eliminate all closed fishing days and allow commercial fishing seven days per week. This will provide the commercial fishery with additional access to the quota during the fall period to account for potential days lost to weather, as this small boat fishery is frequently limited by worsening fall weather.
- **Trip Limits.** Effective August 30, 2021, increase the black sea bass pot and hook and line trip limits by 25% from 400 pounds for potters and 200 pounds for hook and liners to 500 pounds for potters and 250 pounds for hook and liners. This will allow commercial fishermen to retain and land additional fish on a daily basis in order to achieve the annual quota.

DMF last adjusted the regulatorily set commercial fishing limits for the directed hook and line and pot fishery for black sea bass in 2017. Since that time, the annual commercial black sea bass quota allocated to Massachusetts by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has increased by about 32% in response to improving stock conditions. Despite these quota increases, DMF has not amended the regulatory limits for the directed fishery, instead favoring using the quota to extend the fishery into the fall and relying on annual in-season adjustments to ensure full quota utilization.

Instructions for Public Comment

DMF is seeking comments on the above described proposals. Of specific interest is whether these proposed adjustments should occur earlier or later in the season or whether additional

adjustments and trip limit increases are necessary. DMF will be accepting public comment on these proposals through Friday, August 13, 2021. Please address all written comments to Director Dan McKiernan. All comments are to be submitted to DMF by e-mail (marine.fish@mass.gov) or by post (251 Causeway Street, Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114).

Public comment will be considered in DMF's final recommendation to the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC). The MFAC will review the public comments and vote on DMF's final recommendation at their August 19, 2021 business meeting. If approved by the MFAC, the in-season adjustments will be announced on August 20, 2021 and will be in effect for the remainder of 2021 fishing season, unless otherwise amended.

For more information about the management of marine fisheries in Massachusetts, contact DMF at 617-626-1520 or visit our website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.