



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

August 20, 2020 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the August 20, 2020 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This MFAC meeting was held virtually. All meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#). The full meeting can be viewed on DMF's [YouTube page](#).

Action Items

DMF provided the MFAC with a review of the status of the state's quota managed fisheries. This then transitioned into DMF's recommendations to take action to make in-season adjustments to the commercial fishing limits for striped bass, black sea bass and summer flounder. Initial proposals were set forth in an [August 10 advisory](#) and accepting comments on the proposals. After reviewing the proposals and debating DMF's recommendations, the MFAC approved the following in-season adjustments and these limits will apply for the remainder of the 2020 commercial fishing season:

- [Commercial Striped Bass](#). Effective September 1, Tuesdays will be added as an open fishing day. This will allow for commercial fishing to occur over three consecutive calendar days (Mondays – Wednesdays).
- [Black Sea Bass](#). Effective August 31, Mondays and Wednesdays will be added as open commercial fishing days for potters and hook and line fishermen. This will allow these gear types to fish for black sea bass five-days per week (Sundays – Thursdays). Then, on October 2, Saturdays and Sundays will be added as open fishing days for potters and hook and line fishermen. This will allow for these gear types to fish for black sea bass seven days per week. Additionally, effective August 31, the daily trip limits for potters and hook and line fishermen will increase by 25%. For potters the limit will increase from 400 to 500 pounds and for hook and line fishermen the limit will increase from 200 to 250 pounds.
- [Summer Flounder](#). Effective August 23, the commercial trip limit for fishermen using nets will increase from 400 to 600 pounds. Then, effective October 4, the trip limit for all gear types will be increased to 1,000 pounds and the closed fishing days on Fridays and Saturdays will be eliminated. This will match the commercial rules for October with those currently in place during November and December.

The MFAC then reviewed and unanimously approved DMF's proposal to close the Cape Cod Canal to commercial striped bass fishing. This rule was previously enacted by emergency regulation for the 2020 season and will now remain in effect moving forward. The rule restricts fishermen from retaining or possessing striped bass in a manner that does not conform to the recreational striped bass rules when fishing along the Canal or within 1,000 feet of the Canal shoreline. Exempt from this 1,000 foot rule are vessels and vehicles transiting along or through the Canal or offloading fish at Canal adjacent ports that were lawfully caught elsewhere.

Discussion Items

DMF provided an overview regarding ongoing endangered species litigation. This litigation has resulted in the state having to apply for an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) – under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act – for its state-waters fixed gear fisheries. DMF is consulting NOAA Fisheries on this application and has assembled a task force to develop the permit application. This will likely result in DMF having to amend how it manages fixed gear fisheries in state-waters.

The MFAC and DMF then engaged in its monthly discussion regarding how the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is impacting the seafood industry. DMF started by providing a progress report on its CARES Act Relief program. Payments have been made to head boats; the application period for charter boats and aquaculturists was ongoing with payments expected to be made in mid-September; and applications will be sent out to seafood processors and commercial fishermen in the next several weeks with payments likely occurring four to six weeks later. More details may be found on DMF's [CARES Act website](#). DMF then provided an update on its seafood marketing efforts. This included discussion of recent radio marketing efforts and DMF's online chef's series that highlights local seafood recipes by local chefs. DMF then reviewed recent changes to the [workplace safety guidelines](#) affecting the for-hire fleet; the ASMFC's approval of DMF's proposal to extend the recreational for-hire fishing season for black sea bass (see [Advisory](#)); NOAA fisheries action to adjust the recreational Gulf of Maine cod and haddock limits for the current fishing year, which DMF will mirror (see [Advisory](#)); and the resumption of the federal at-sea observer program.

DMF then briefed the MFAC on ongoing federal and interstate fisheries management issues. Discussion focused on the federal groundfish monitoring amendment, the adoption of ecosystem-based reference points for the menhaden stock assessment, reallocation amendments for black sea bass, scup, and summer flounder, and the bluefish rebuilding amendment.

Upcoming Meetings

The next MFAC business meeting is scheduled for September 21, 2020. The meeting location is to be determined. For more information, view the [MFAC's website](#).

If you would like to obtain any materials regarding past or upcoming MFAC business meetings, please contact Jared Silva at DMF (617-626-1534 or jared.silva@state.ma.us).