



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

(617) 626-1520 | [www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries)



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August 24, 2023

### Marine Fisheries Advisory

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT ON IN-SEASON ADJUSTMENT TO COMMERCIAL MENHADEN TRIP LIMIT TRIGGERS FOR 2023**

In response to fishery performance and quota utilization so far in 2023, DMF is proposing an in-season adjustment to the commercial menhaden rules to eliminate the trigger that reduces the trip limit from 120,000 pounds to 25,000 pounds once 50% of the quota is taken. At present, DMF projects about 20% of the annual menhaden quota has been landed. The proposed adjustment will allow the fishery to continue operating at the current 120,000-pound trip limit until 90% of the quota is taken. Given fishery dynamics thus far this year, it appears unlikely that 90% of the quota will be reached regardless of the trip limit, but if it is, the trip limit would then be reduced to 25,000 pounds until the quota is taken.

Maintaining the trip limit at the higher level longer will allow and potentially encourage properly permitted offshore vessels, such as midwater trawlers, to land menhaden caught in federal waters in Massachusetts later should they encounter them. State-waters catch rates are unlikely to increase drastically unless inshore availability of menhaden increases during their southerly fall migration from areas north and east. While coastwide menhaden abundance remains above the target level which results in a population that migrates this far north, their distribution can fluctuate year-to-year, which affects local availability. The inshore availability of menhaden so far this year has not followed the trend of recent years in which a large biomass of menhaden has concentrated in many of our coastal waters for an extended period of time. This year, environmental or ecosystem conditions may have contributed to reduced inshore availability, which along with additional menhaden management measures implemented this year (including a later season start date) has contributed to the fishery's reduced landings in 2023.

#### **Instructions for Public Comment**

DMF will accept written public comment through Friday, September 8, 2023. Please address all written comments to Director Dan McKiernan and submit them by e-mail to [marine.fish@mass.gov](mailto:marine.fish@mass.gov). 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 September 19, 2023 business meeting. If approved by the MFAC, the in-season adjustment will go into effect for September 20 and will remain in effect for the rest of the 2023 season unless otherwise adjusted.