



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

251 Causeway Street, Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114

p: (617) 626-1520 | f: (617) 626-1509

www.mass.gov/marinefisheries



CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

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Lt. Governor

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

DMF has begun the process of providing federal CARES relief to the fishing and seafood industries

Aquaculture and charter boat operators will see their applications this week with other sectors to follow

The Division of Marine Fisheries has begun the process to distribute federal disaster relief that Congress and the President approved to mitigate the financial impacts to marine fisheries participants that have suffered at least a 35% loss of revenue due to the ongoing pandemic. In the days ahead, some Massachusetts permit holders in certain sectors will be receiving mailed applications.

In March, the CARES Act provided \$300 million of aid for the seafood industry with \$27.8 million coming to Massachusetts, the third highest of all coastal states. The funds were allocated among the states based on the relative contributions to the economy of four distinct sectors: commercial fishing, marine aquaculture, seafood processing, and for-hire (party and charter boats) fishing businesses. Each state was required to submit a spend plan for the disbursement of its allocated funds following certain federal guidelines. DMF has allocated funds to each of the four industry sectors, proportional to the scale of each sector. DMF's spending plan has been approved by NOAA Fisheries so DMF has now begun the application processes.

On August 3rd, aquaculture permit holders and charter boat operators were mailed (via US Postal Service) an application to be completed and returned to DMF in the next two weeks. All applications must be submitted to DMF to be eligible for the receipt of the funds. DMF is delaying sending applications to seafood processors for another two weeks and commercial fishermen, the largest sector, will see their applications mailed in about three weeks. All applications will be mailed to the address on their DMF-issued permit.

DMF received advice from industry members through working groups created for each sector and established eligibility standards for relief and scaling of payments based on the level of activity or scale of operation attributable to each eligible permit. For example, eligible commercial fishermen must have earned at least \$15,000 in annual seafood sales in at least one of the past three years, and charter boats must have conducted at least 50 trips in a given year over the previous 2 years to be eligible. Also, payments will be scaled based on sector-specific metrics. Some industry participants who actively participate in more than one sector may be eligible for payments from each sector's program.

DMF is maintaining a web site with all announcements and program progress. The public is urged to visit the web site at: www.mass.gov/dmf/cares for updates and detailed explanations of each sector-specific program. Any permit holder who seeks to follow the status of their eligibility and application status can visit the DMF web site to see the lists within each sector. DMF staff will update these lists frequently to allow inquiring permit holders to determine their eligibility status, and the status of their application without having to speak to a staff person directly.

Anticipating that there will be some applications that require more detailed resolution, DMF has also set up a special email address (dmf.caresrelief@mass.gov) to receive inquiries about the program and any specific application. Applicants are asked to send emails to that address and DMF will have multiple staff available to resolve questions and inquiries through emails and phone calls as they come in.