



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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September 16, 2024

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Pilot Program to Allow State Waters Trawlers and Gillnetters to Land Consecutive Daily Limits of Flounder Species

For this fall and winter, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has initiated a pilot program to accommodate commercial trawlers and gillnetters participating in the state-waters groundfish fishery to land two daily limits of Gulf of Maine winter flounder and yellowtail flounder that were lawfully caught and retained over consecutive calendar days. The purpose of this pilot program is to enhance flexibility and safety for these small-scale vessels given the high cost of fuel, the long-distance vessels have to travel between port and seasonal fishing grounds, and challenges related accessing fish buyers in certain ports.

This pilot program is modeled after the program that DMF has authorized the past six seasons for the summertime mixed species trawl fishery south and west of Cape Cod. Participating vessels will be issued a Letter of Authorization and a set of single use lockable tags by DMF. During any two-day trip, the commercial fisher will be required to: (1) retain no more than a single trip limit of Gulf of Maine winter flounder (500 pounds) and yellowtail flounder (350 pounds) during any single calendar day; (2) segregate the first day's catch of winter flounder and yellowtail flounder from the second day's catch; (3) store the first day's catch in a sealed container locked with the single use tag issued by DMF; and (4) maintain a logbook documenting each days catch to be presented to enforcement for inspection upon request.

To be eligible to participate in this program the commercial fisher must hold a Coastal Access Permit or a Gillnet Endorsement along with a Groundfish Endorsement. To apply, please provide: (1) permit holder name; (2) vessel name; and (3) DMF permit number in an email to marine.fish@mass.gov. DMF will begin to review and process these applications upon receipt and applicants will receive their Letter of Authorization and tags shortly thereafter. The effective start date of the program is Monday, September 23, 2024.

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