



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission April 24, 2025 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the April 24, 2025 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This business meeting was held at the Kingston Town Hall in Kingston, MA. A recording is available for viewing on [DMF's YouTube Channel](#). All meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#).

Action Item

Refinement to Final Mechanized Bait Deployment Rule. At its March 2025 business meeting, the MFAC approved a DMF recommendation to constrain the use of mechanized and motorized devices to deploy baited hooks while rod and reel fishing. In developing the final regulatory language, DMF determined the recommendation was not sufficiently clear. Specifically, there was uncertainty as to what constituted a mechanized or motorized device and whether the rule applied to all fishing or just shore fishing. Accordingly, DMF sought to modify the recommendation to: (1) prohibit the deployment of baited hooks by use of any motorized, compressed propulsion, or remote-controlled devices (e.g., bait cannons, drones, rc-boats) when fishing rod and reel gear from the shoreline, any structure attached to the shoreline, and wade fishing; and (2) exempt the use of non-mechanized devices the use of kayaks or kites. The rule will also not apply to power reels as these devices retrieve, rather than deploy, bait. This recommendation passed 3-2-1.

Emergency Rule Making

Addendum XXXII to American Lobster Fishery Management Plan. DMF anticipated the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) would approve Addendum XXXII to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for American Lobster at its upcoming May 5 meeting. This addendum repeals the gauge size and escape vent rules previously adopted by Addendum XXVII and scheduled to begin to go into effect later this year. Accordingly, DMF initiated emergency rule making to implement Addendum XXXII and rescind relevant state regulations prior to their scheduled implementation date. DMF will host a virtual [public hearing](#) at 6PM on May 19 and will return to the MFAC with a final recommendation at their May 29 business meeting. DMF and the MFAC discussed how Addendum XXXII did not include a repeal of the v-notch standardization measure for the Outer Cape Cod Lobster Conservation Management Area (OCCLCMA) contained in Addendum XXVII and only a small number of state-only OCCLCMA permit holders.

Discussion Items

Decision on Commercial Striped Bass Management Proposal. DMF informed the MFAC that it would not move forward a final recommendation on draft regulations taken to public hearing this past winter that would adopt a maximum size limit and gaffing prohibition for the commercial striped bass fishery. This decision was influenced by three factors. First, DMF could not provide adequate information about the potential impact of size limit changes on the state's quota given such actions trigger review processes by the ASMFC's Technical Committee and the timeline for these review processes. Second, public comment highlighted that DMF needed to further consider and document the conservation benefit of adopting a maximum size limit and how

fecundity-at-size and discard mortality information should be incorporated into the methodology for determining conservationally equivalent quota adjustments. Lastly, any changes to commercial striped bass management measures should be considered within the framework of the pending ASMFC addendum to the FMP which should be approved later this year for implementation in 2026. With this in consideration, DMF intends to convene the MFAC's Striped Bass Focus Group and assemble an industry working group to consider potential changes to striped bass management and permitting.

Federal Fisheries Management Update. DMF provided the MFAC with a review of the January and April 2025 New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) meetings and a preview of the June NEFMC agenda. The focus was primarily on groundfish management and included: (1) the NEFMC's development and approval of recreational cod and haddock limits for review by NOAA Fisheries and potential implementation later this year; (2) an update on the status of Amendment 25 and Framework 69 to the Multi-Species Groundfish FMP; and (3) an exempted fishery permit for DMF and the Northeast Seafood Coalition to explore carving out access to cod spawning closures to target non-cod species. DMF also discussed the setting of herring quotas, setting NEFMC management priorities; and other issues pertaining federal fisheries management (e.g., personnel challenges at NOAA Fisheries, cost-saving measures regarding NEFMC meeting, issues regarding surveys and data collection, interest in enhancing management flexibility, and the Executive Order on Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness).

Presentation

DMF staff provided a presentation on declining eelgrass habitat, efforts to restore eelgrass, challenges to restoration work at-scale, and frameworks for the future of eelgrass conservation.

Upcoming Meetings

The MFAC will meet next on May 29, 2025 at SMAST East located at 836 South Rodney French Boulevard in New Bedford, MA.