

Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

Final Business Meeting Minutes

August 21, 2025

DFW Field Headquarters, 1 Rabbit Hill Rd, Westborough, MA

Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission: Raymond Kane, Chairman; Arthur “Sooky” Sawyer; Bill Amaru; Kalil Boghdan; Chris McGuire; Eric Nelson, Bill Doyle, Eric Nelson, and Ray Jarvis. Absent: Shelley Edmundson.

Division of Marine Fisheries: Dan McKiernan, Director; Story Reed, Deputy Director; Bob Glenn, Deputy Director; Anna Webb, Assistant Deputy Director; Jared Silva; Nichola Meserve; Tracy Pugh; and Derek Perry.

Department of Fish and Game: Tom O’Shea, Commissioner

Massachusetts Environmental Police: Captain Jack Chapin

Members of the Public: Sharl Heller, Brad Winn, Brenda Boleyn, Jamie Bassett

Call To Order And Routine Business

Chairman Ray Kane called the meeting to order. The Chairman recognized that Kalil Boghdan would be stepping down from the MFAC at the end of his term (August 23, 2025) and thanked him for his nine years of service to the MFAC. He then welcomed the two newest MFAC members — Eric Nelson and Ray Jarvis — who filled the seats previously held by Tim Brady and Mike Pierdinock. Eric and Ray thanked Chairman Kane and voiced excitement to be part of the MFAC.

Kalil Boghdan asked for an update concerning his soon-to-be vacant seat. Commissioner Tom O’Shea recognized the need to expediently fill Kalil’s seat and voiced his intent to appoint a new member as soon as possible.

Review Of August 2025 Business Meeting Agenda

Chairman Kane asked for amendments to the August 2025 Business Meeting Agenda. There were no amendments.

Review And Approval Of July 2025 Draft Business Meeting Minutes

Chairman Kane asked for any amendments to the draft July 2025 business meeting minutes. There were no amendments. **The Chair called for a motion. Sooky Sawyer made a motion to accept the minutes as drafted and Bill Amaru seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Office Of Law Enforcement: Personnel, Recent Operations & Marine Fishery Incidents

Captain Jack Chapin provided comments for the Massachusetts Environmental Police. John Monaghan was recently appointed Colonel. Chapin provided the MFAC with some background and personal history on Monaghan and noted he recently attended the Martha's Vineyard Fishermen's Preservation Trust's Meet the Fleet and met those MFAC members and DMF personnel in attendance. Chapin hoped the Colonel would join the MFAC at an upcoming meeting.

Chapin provided an update on recent marine fishery violations. He described a case in Westport involving multiple size and possession limit violations for scup, tautog, fluke, and sea bass. The violators were civilly charged with fines in excess of \$40,000. Chapin then discussed shore-based shark fishing following DMF's implementation of regulations earlier this year prohibiting this activity in certain areas around Cape Cod to prevent targeting white sharks. There were some reports of this occurring on the Cape but MEP has not observed it. Additionally, there were reports of sand tiger sharks and white sharks being caught from Nantucket beaches, which captured attention on social media. Lastly, MEP was monitoring recreational blue crab fishing for gear, possession limit, and size limit violations.

Chapin discussed MEP's role as security support to the Department of Conservation and Recreation's facilities throughout the summer.

On personnel, he added that MEP intends to hire seven additional officers by next summer.

Sooky Sawyer asked about the enforcement of lobster possession limits on trawlers landing in Provincetown. Captain Chapin responded that MEP dedicated resources to this over the past year and made one case this past winter. Sawyer and Chapin discussed the value of deploying more officers in this area. Bill Amaru noted that many trawlers land in Provincetown legally and increased monitoring has motivated the fishery to self-regulate. Chapin agreed, noting that few violations have been observed.

Department Of Fish And Game: Recent Meetings And Events And Department-Wide Activities And Projects

Commissioner Tom O'Shea welcomed Ray Jarvis and Eric Nelson to the MFAC, highlighting the value of their perspectives, particularly as it relates to recreational fisheries.

O'Shea said that he had the chance to meet Colonel Monaghan and expressed his interest in helping to increase MEP's capacity for coastal enforcement. He encouraged the Colonel to join future MFAC meetings.

The Commissioner then discussed shellfish management. He recognized DMF's work on managing *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* cases tied to oysters harvested in Duxbury Bay and Pleasant Bay. He applauded DMF's effort to efficiently develop precautionary closures in these areas to safeguard public health. Additionally, the Town of Ipswich has asked DFG and DMF to attend a meeting to discuss the shellfish area reclassifications in Ipswich related to their sewage treatment plant outfall and minimum dilution standards under the National Shellfish Sanitation Program's Model Ordinance. The meeting will address questions posed by the Town of Ipswich, highlight what work has been done so far, and what can be done in the future through DMF's partnership with the FDA.

DFG just finalized the Commonwealth's Biodiversity Goals Report. Governor Healey was hosting an event to announce the report later today on Cape Cod and Tom expressed his gratitude for the Governor's support for this initiative, including funding for marine restoration projects. DFG staff would present on the report at a future MFAC meeting. Additionally, the Commissioner had traveled to participate in their 30 x 30 Partnership Summit and discuss Massachusetts' biodiversity initiative.

Division Of Marine Fisheries: Personnel, Recent Meetings And Events, And Agency Activities And Projects

Director Dan McKiernan began his comments by further discussing the issues related to the reclassification of shellfish growing areas in Ipswich. Since 2015, the Model Ordinance has required buffer zones around sewage treatment plant outfalls where the harvest of shellfish is prohibited to address potential plant failures and contaminants in treated wastewater that are not tested for (e.g., PFAS). To minimize closure impacts, DMF has worked with SMAST to develop models for effluent dilution and has worked to limit the extent of the closures to the lowest possible dilution threshold allowed under nationwide public health standards.

Dan voiced support for inviting the Colonel to join a MFAC meeting in the future and for the MFAC to discuss with the Colonel the potential need for a letter of support for funding and staffing.

Dan welcomed Ray Jarvis and Eric Nelson to the MFAC and was hopeful that Kalil's soon-to-be-vacant seat will be expediently filled.

McKiernan then outlined several ongoing lawsuits involving state and interstate fishery management. These included federal and state suits in Massachusetts' courts concerning v-notch possession standards for the Outer Cape Cod (OCC) Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA), federal suits in Maryland involving the interstate management of striped bass, and state court suits involving lobster vessel tracker in Maine and Massachusetts. Dan remarked on the value of support from the Attorney General's office and DFG's General Counsel, as well as ASFMC's legal team.

Lastly, Dan praised Shelley Edmundson and the Martha Vineyard's Fishermen's Preservation Trust's for their execution of the recent Meet the Fleet event.

2024 Fishery Review And 2025 Quota Managed Fishery Performance

Anna Webb provided the MFAC with a review of landings, values, and trends in 2024 of fishery resources landed in Massachusetts, which includes federal and state managed fisheries.

Bill Amaru and Webb discussed how ex-vessel value of sea scallops considers whole scallops for effective comparison across fisheries.

Kalil Boghdan requested that the full list of species be made available to the MFAC. Webb stated she would provide this to Kalil.

Anna then outlined the 2024 quota summary. Quotas were close to 100% fulfilled for all species, except tautog, which experienced an overage (113.3%) due to an abnormally high final week of the fishery, and scup and spiny dogfish, which remain underutilized.

Overall, total state landings have declined over the past several years. 2024 ex-vessel value dropped below values in 2020, primarily driven by a decline in the performance of the federal sea scallop fishery. Chris McGuire, Bill Amaru, and Director McKiernan discussed the state of the sea scallop fishery, the resource's reduced abundance, and the impact of regulations.

Webb provided an update on overall trends in fishery performance for American lobster and groundfish. Amaru, Webb, Doyle, and Commissioner O'Shea discussed the decline in value of groundfish and the impact of imported fish and environmental factors.

Webb then transitioned to the performance of 2025 quota managed fisheries.

Black Sea Bass

The fishery is following 2024 trends. There was a decrease in quota in 2025, but Massachusetts obtained an interstate transfer prior to the start of the season to buffer against the reduction. Based on recent catch rates, DMF is projecting the fishery will close in early-October. Director McKiernan noted that on September 15, "no fishing days" will be eliminated by regulation and the trip limits will increase for pots and hooks.

On ex-vessel value, Webb explained that 2025 value has been comparable to previous years. Silva and Amaru discussed the influence of fish size variations on ex-vessel value.

Summer flounder

The 2025 is set at about 600,000 pounds, similar to 2024. Based on a late August fishery closure in 2024, DMF amended the management program to make more quota available to the summertime fishery and extend quota availability until at least September. As a result, the Period I (January 1 – April 22) fishery landed only about 40% of its seasonal allocation and 8% of the overall quota leaving the remaining quota (~550,000 pounds) for the Period II (April 23 – December 31) fishery. The summertime season (April 23 – September 30) has underperformed comparative to last year. As a result, the summertime quota-use-based trip limit reduction trip limits (75% of quota taken on or before August 15) was not triggered and DMF anticipates quota will remain available into the fall season (October 1 – December 31). There are two upcoming quota-use-based fishing limit adjustments. If 20% or more of the quota remains available on September 1, then the trip limit will increase to 800 pounds for all gear types and Saturdays will be eliminated as no fishing days (allowing for seven open days per week). Then if 10% or more of the quota remains available on October the trip limit will increase to 5,000 pounds. Ex-vessel value is higher than some previous years.

Bait Horseshoe Crabs

Landings are following similar trends to 2024. There is an upcoming quota-use-based trip limit reduction — should 80% or more of the quota be taken on or before September 15, the trip limit will be reduced from 300 to 200 crabs to preserve a bycatch allowance for mobile gear fishers throughout the fall. Webb, Silva, and McKiernan discussed the regulatorily driven shifts in the fishery from springtime hand harvesting to summertime mobile gear fishing. Silva and McKiernan also discussed that many of the crabs taken against the bait quota are also utilized in the so-called rent-a-crab program whereby biomedical firms borrow crabs from bait dealers for bleeding before being sold to fishers as bait.

Scup

Performance is similar to recent years and the summertime quota (May – September) will likely be underutilized. The ex-vessel value has increased slightly in 2024 and 2025 compared to other recent years.

Bluefish

The bluefish quota is underutilized and will likely not be achieved. If quota remains in October (when the fish typically become less available in Massachusetts waters), DMF will likely look transfer some of its underutilized quota to other states that may want it to support their local fisheries. This occurred in 2024 as well.

Menhaden

Landings are tracking similarly to recent years. The trip limit dropped from 120,000 pounds to 25,000 pounds on June 9 once 50% of the quota was taken. The fishery was not approaching 100% quota utilization. If the quota is taken before September 1, Massachusetts could opt into the Episodic Event Set Aside (EESA) and keep the fishery open at the current 25,000 pound limit but catch would have to occur in state-waters only. However, if the quota is not taken by September 1, but we reach 98% quota use after September 1, then the trip limit is reduced to 6,000 pounds. In this scenario, DMF may seek an interstate quota transfer to maintain the fishery at the 25,000-pound trip limit throughout the remainder of the season and vessels would not be limited to state-waters only. The question of how to proceed is challenging. DMF's preference, consistent with the purpose of the interstate fishery management plan, is to pursue the EESA rather than a quota transfer. However, this may constrain the fleet by limiting where they may fish. Throughout the season much of the catch has occurred in deeper waters and in the federal zone, however, there are recent reports of biomass moving back inshore into state-waters. Regarding ex-vessel value there has been a steady price increase over time.

Striped Bass

The commercial fishery closed on August 8. Present data have landings at 99.8% of the quota. The season produced 15 open days with an average daily catch rate of 45,000 pounds per day. This rate is nearly 10% higher than the rate in 2024. As more than 70% of the quota was fulfilled by August 1, so Thursday was not added as an open day. Ex-vessel value was similar to previous years.

Chairman Kane, Bill Doyle, Kalil Boghdan, and Nichola Meserve discussed the environmental and fishing pressure impacts on the bluefish fishery. Meserve explained that the ASMFC projects the stock to be rebuilt this year. Webb and Silva then commented on the episodic nature of the fishery in Massachusetts. Ray Jarvis and Meserve discussed how the resource has been more available off North Carolina in recent years.

Doyle and Webb discussed the geographic distribution of striped bass, with more landings reported on the north shore compared to Cape Cod.

Boghdan, Webb, Silva, and McKiernan discussed the federal management of the surf clam fishery and its geographic shifts offshore. Bob Glenn and Webb noted how abundance is not always clearly reflected through landings and ex-vessel values, citing the influence of different market drivers.

Discussion Items

Interstate Fishery Management Update

Nichola Meserve presented the 2026-2027 specifications for bluefish, summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass set by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and ASMFC. DMF anticipates the coastwide commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL) will be increased for bluefish, summer flounder, and black sea bass (all by 30% or more). For scup, the commercial quota is expected to decrease slightly both years whereas the RHL is expected to increase in 2026 before decreasing in 2027. The increase to the bluefish RHL in conjunction with recent catch trends, resulted in the MAFMC and ASMFC supporting an increase to the coastwide recreational bag limits.

Silva, Chairman Kane, and Meserve discussed the schedule for final determinations on recreational fishing limits for scup, black sea bass, and summer flounder. Meserve noted that the ASMFC will determine coastwide allowances in December before the MFAC meets in March to determine any emergency regulations by May 1. Per the Recreational Measure Setting Process, an increased RHL does not always lead to a relaxation of measures, nor does a reduced RHL necessarily lead to more conservative limits.

Meserve then discussed the Recreational Sector Separation Draft Amendment. This Draft Amendment considers managing recreational modes (i.e., for-hire and private anglers) in different ways. At the ASMFC meeting in August, the options for separate allocations for for-hire mode were removed from consideration. However, the ASMFC is still considering separate limit setting measures for for-hire mode, guidelines and standards for mode splits, and for-hire permitting and reporting requirements.

Chairman Kane asked whether MRIP was undergoing a recalibration. Meserve responded that MRIP will release results from their recalibration in early 2026, which may lead to different estimates from MRIP in previous years and changes in stock assessment and management.

Meserve then discussed the ASMFC's approval of Draft Addendum III to Amendment 7 to the Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan. Public hearings will be held in September before final action is taken by the ASMFC in late October. The draft addendum includes options that standardize the method for total length measurement coastwide; implementation a coastwide point-of-harvest tagging; adjust the timing of the recreational fishing season in the Chesapeake Bay; and support stock rebuilding by 2029 through reducing fishery removals by 12% applied equally to the commercial and recreational sectors.

Director McKiernan, Chairman Kane, and Nichola Meserve discussed how the ASMFC removed an option that would achieve the full reduction in fishery removals through constraining the recreational sector only. Director McKiernan opined that calls to adopt

less constraining fishery removal targets for the commercial sector were short-sighted and would likely heighten calls for gamefish status and jeopardize the long-term viability of the commercial fishery.

For the commercial fishery, a 12% reduction in harvest is accomplished through a commensurate cut to the commercial quota. For the recreational fishery, it would involve changes to seasons and size limits. Meserve then outlined how potential options may impact the ocean fishery and Chesapeake Bay fishery. Seasonal closures would either be implemented as a “no harvesting” closure or “no targeting” closure.

Commissioner O'Shea asked to clarify why there was a higher slot limit for for-hire anglers compared to private vessel and shore-based anglers. Meserve responded that this difference was advocated for by the for-hire fishery to better support their businesses.

McKiernan remarked that recreational no targeting closures would potentially allow for shorter closed periods but are exceptionally difficult to enforce. Captain Chapin agreed.

Chris McGuire asked how MEP would enforce a no targeting closure. Chapin responded that without specific guidance as to what constitutes no targeting, it would be exceptionally challenging to pursue a violation that would meet the burden of proof. Chairman Kane, Director McKiernan, and Nicola Meserve stated that concerns underscored the hesitancy among some states, particularly in the northeast, to pursue no targeting closures. Jarvis and Nelson agreed that targeting closures are not enforceable and should not be supported.

Meserve then outlined how no harvest closures might take shape and noted that implementing closures around the shoulder seasons in Wave 3 (May – June) or Wave 5 (September – October) may be more palatable than a mid-season closure in Wave 4 (July – August) but would require longer closures.

Jarvis voiced his concern that shoulder season closures would disproportionately impact South Coast anglers as these closures would likely occur during the seasons when these fish are locally available. Accordingly, much of the conservation benefits realized from these seasons would come on the back of those recreational anglers who already have the shortest season to target these fish given environmental conditions affecting seasonal availability.

Chairman Kane asked what closure option would allow for the greatest access for the southern region. Jarvis noted that these anglers would benefit from open seasons in Wave 3 or Wave 5.

Eric Nelson voiced support for avoiding a recreational fishery closure during any period when the commercial fishery is open.

Boghdan and Meserve discussed the approaches that the southern states may take to developing closures.

There was a general sentiment among the MFAC and DMF that the question of harvest closures seasons will be challenging for Massachusetts given the seasonal availability of these fish throughout the state and the interest in avoiding recreational closures during the peak summertime fishing and tourist season and throughout the state's commercial fishery. Director McKiernan noted that MFAC will meet again before the ASMFC public hearings in September, allowing the MFAC an additional opportunity to discuss the addendum.

Bill Doyle asked about updates regarding yellowtail and winter flounders. Meserve responded that Melanie will provide a federal fisheries update at the September meeting.

Commercial Striped Bass Management Considerations for 2026

Director McKiernan discussed potential management considerations concerning the commercial striped bass fishery beginning in 2026. DMF recently convened a commercial striped bass industry advisory panel and the MFAC's Striped Bass Focus Group to discuss the management of Massachusetts' commercial striped bass fishery in the context of Draft Addendum III and evolving management objectives. Based on these meetings, DMF developed a framework for potential management actions. For 2026, DMF intends to enact a moratorium on permit issuance by limiting renewals only to those individuals who held an endorsement in 2024 or 2025. Then for 2027, DMF may further reduce access based on to-be-developed activity criteria, particularly if a harvester tagging program is adopted. Additionally, DMF will consider making the limited entry endorsement owner-operator and non-transferable between individuals. If the endorsement is established as non-transferable, inactive permits would be retired and made available to new entrants based on a waiting list or lottery process according to exit:entry ratios. To address quota utilization and possibly extend the season into August, DMF will consider a later start date (e.g., June 23 rather than June 16) or reduced daily trip limit (e.g., 10 fish rather than 15 fish). Lastly, DMF will consider requiring that harvesters bring all commercially harvested striped bass, including those being kept for personal use, to a dealer for weigh-in and reporting. DMF will return to the MFAC in the fall with the full public hearing proposal.

Bill Amaru asked if the potential criteria to reduce access would be similar to the approach used to limit access to the tautog permit. Dan explained that this ultimately depends on the goal of reducing access. However, if Massachusetts were to adopt a point-of-harvest tagging program then it would have to likely reduce the number of permit holders from around 5,000 to about 500 and this would require significant activity thresholds. Amaru remarked on the intensity of this potential action and the subsequent loss of access.

Kalil Boghdan asked if there is an optimal number of permit holders to ease the process of harvester tagging. Dan responded that if ASMFC requires harvester tagging of Massachusetts, DMF would aim to have about 500 permit holders.

Sooky Sawyer asked to clarify differences in catch limits by permit type. Silva and McKiernan noted that vessel-based permit holders fishing from the named vessel have a 15-fish limit where all other commercial permits have a two-fish limit. Kane, McKiernan, and Sawyer discussed how these discrepancies in limits across permit types may have to be considered when developing potential activity criteria to reduce access in future years.

Nelson voiced support for reducing the number of commercial striped bass permits.

Amaru voiced concern about making it difficult for people to enter the striped bass fishery with additional restrictions. Chairman Kane noted that a potential solution was discussed at the sub-group meeting to develop a lottery system to allow new permit holders to enter the fishery.

Pine Barren Alliance's Petition to Close Three Bays to Horseshoe Crab Harvest

In April 2025, the Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance petitioned the MFAC and DMF to close the Three Bays (Plymouth, Kingston, and Duxbury Bays) to horseshoe crab harvest and provided an extensive report in support of their petition. Chairman Kane provided the petitioners an opportunity to briefly speak to the merits of their petition.

Sharl Heller, President of the Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barren Alliance (SEMPBA), spoke on behalf of the petitioners. Heller noted the petition was driven by three factors: (1) under current management, the Three Bays has not experienced significant improvements to horseshoe crab abundance; (2) based on historical observations provided by the Kingston and Duxbury shellfish constables, horseshoe crab populations are significantly lower than they were historically; and (3) the economic impact of closing the Three Bays to harvest is likely limited given the low number of active fishers.

Chairman Kane welcomed MFAC members to ask questions of the petitioners. Boghdan asked for the value of the horseshoe crab harvester in the Three Bays. Silva noted that this is confidential information.

Doyle and Heller discussed where spawning surveys were occurring. Doyle noted he frequently observes large numbers of horseshoe crabs around his aquaculture grant area in Plymouth and suggested reconsidering the location of spawning surveys.

Amaru voiced appreciation for Heller's efforts to protect this species. However, he was concerned that the low population was not driven by fishing activity, but environmental factors. He suggested SEMPBA consider pursuing measures to improve habitat and water quality, particularly as it relates to the use of fertilizers.

Heller noted that SEMPBA shares concerns about the environmental health of these embayments. In recent years, they have sought to make horseshoe crabs a species of special concern and have the Three Bays be treated as a refuge to help raise awareness around the struggling local horseshoe crab population and help build support to address potentially contributing environmental factors. Brenda Boleyn also spoke for the petitioners. She agreed with Amaru's concerns about the local environment and noted that the crabs in the Three Bays appear to be unhealthy.

Boghdan asked how Heller defines the term refuge. Heller explained that a refuge would be an area where the harvest of horseshoe crabs is prohibited. Boghdan then asked if SEMPBA sought for DMF to take their petition out to public hearing and Heller confirmed this intent.

Derek Perry presented DMF's analysis of the petition. He outlined horseshoe crab population health by examining fisheries data and population status in Massachusetts and within the Three Bays. On fisheries data, Perry showed that in 2024, 96% of horseshoe crab bait landings took place in Nantucket Sound, with about 1% north of Cape Cod. The average annual harvest in the Three Bays (2013 – 2023) ranging from 967 to nearly 7,000 crabs. In 2024, this number greatly reduced due to the April 15 – June 7 spawning closure that was implemented during the season. In 2025, there was no harvest reported from the Three Bays to date. Historically, nearly all of the Three Bays harvest occurred during the current spawning closure.

Perry then outlined fisheries independent surveys, with data from DMF's trawl and seine surveys since 1980's and the spawning beach survey since 2008. He described increases in horseshoe crab numbers in trawl surveys and seine surveys since the lunar closures were put in place in 2010. Perry then showed the relative stability in horseshoe crab numbers in the Three Bays from spawning surveys over the past ten years. State-wide data show 90% of sites surveyed are increasing over a ten-year trend, while Duxbury and Long Beach have decreasing trends over the long-term. ASMFC horseshoe crab stock assessments show improvements in New England and Massachusetts. Further, IUCN supports improved local and coastwide populations. Director McKiernan voiced appreciation for the conservation community's role and interest in these issues and their assistance with spawning beach surveys. He also recognized his staff's dedication to horseshoe crab management and monitoring. Dan acknowledged that the Three Bays likely host a more isolated horseshoe crab populations than other areas of the state (e.g., Billingsgate, Nantucket Sound), and therefore, the population may be more susceptible to exploitation. However, given the spawning closure that is now in place, he was skeptical that any harvest would be occurring within the Three Bays moving forward. Accordingly, he preferred not to commence with rulemaking to bring this petition to public hearing but would accommodate such an action at the urging of the MFAC.

Chairman Kane requested the MFAC provide feedback to the Director.

Kalil Boghdan expressed his support to bring this issue to public hearing. The other members did not express similar support. The primary objection to moving the petition to public hearing was that fishing activity was likely not the factor most affecting the abundance of horseshoe crabs in the Three Bays and that available data suggested the implementation of a spawning closure in 2024 likely eliminated the small amount of harvest that had previously occurred there. Chris McGuire noted that if harvest returns to this area, it may be an issue to reconsider in the future.

Based on this feedback, McKiernan informed the SEMPBA that he would not move this petition forward to rule-making and public hearing.

Transition to Electronic Harvester Reporting for 2027

Director McKiernan explained that DMF is transitioning to 100% electronic reporting by March 1, 2027. This will allow time for outreach to ease the transition.

Anna Webb explained that this will allow the statistics program to move staff away from data entry towards data auditing and allow for QA/QC data to be more readily analyzed. Reporting programs are free to users but do require the use of an electronic device with internet access.

Of the state's nearly 6,000 state permit holders, about half are already reporting electronically. Webb described DMF's support plan to transition the remaining permit holders over to electronic reporting, including exemptions based on age, as well as in-person training, office hours, phone support by DMF staff, ACCSP-supported vendor for 24/7 support, and resources online.

Amaru, McGuire, Jarvis, and Nelson voiced support for this initiative. McGuire suggested emphasizing the ease of transition, so fishermen are less intimidated by the process. He also added that it would be helpful to develop a report on the benefits following the program's implementation to encourage other groups to do similar projects.

Other Business And Public Comment

Chairman Kane had to depart the meeting. Vice-Chair, Bill Doyle took over the duties of the Chair. Doyle welcomed public comment.

Jamie Bassett from Chatham discussed two points relevant to the biomedical horseshoe crab fishery. First, he requested DMF develop an application process and requirements for the biomedical horseshoe crab dealer permit that recognizes the high level of expertise necessary to participate in this industry. Second, he asked DMF to review its conch fishery effort data to better understand demand for horseshoe crabs as bait and consider potentially developing greater regulatory flexibility to reallocate horseshoe quota from the bait fishery to the biomedical fishery.

Director McKiernan thanked Bassett for his comment and previous correspondence provided to DMF and the MFAC on these subjects. DMF intended to investigate this issue this fall and will report back to the MFAC at a future meeting.

Kalil Boghdan asked about the price of horseshoe crabs. Bassett noted that the price ranges from \$2.50 to \$4, but he dropped his price to \$0.25 to encourage greater demand from the whelk fishery.

Sooky Sawyer then asked about the upcoming lobster stock assessment. Tracy Pugh responded that peer review will occur in early September. If the assessment passes peer review, it will be brought to the ASMFC in October, and the results can be shared with MFAC in November.

Chris McGuire acknowledged the importance of biodiversity in DMF and DFG's work in light of the upcoming Biodiversity Initiative event held by the Governor.

Bill Amaru thanked DMF for their work to protect fisheries in the state.

Kalil thanked the MFAC for the past nine years and asked them to continue to work hard for commercial and recreational fishermen. Director McKiernan thanked Kalil for his nine years of service and his effort to participate in this Commission.

Adjournment

Kalil Boghdan made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Sooky Sawyer seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous consent. The meeting was adjourned.

Meeting Documents

- August 21, 2025 MFAC Business Meeting Agenda
- July 1, 2025 MFAC Draft Business Meeting Minutes
- May 29, 2025 MFAC Final Business Meeting Minutes
- ASMFC Summer Meeting Summary
- Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance's Proposal to Close Three Bays to Horseshoe Crab Fisheries
- Memorandum on 2027 Electronic Harvester Reporting Transition Plan
- DMF Response to Proposal to Restrict Access to Biomedical Dealer Permit to Horseshoe Crabs
- Request to DMF on Transfer Horseshoe crab Bait Quota to Biomedical Quota