



**MARINE FISHERIES ADVISORY COMMISSION
BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA**

9:30AM

Wednesday, August 26, 2026

Weston Public Library

87 School Street, Weston, MA 02493

[Hybrid Login Link](#)

1. Call to Order and Routine Business (9:30 AM)
 - a. Introductions and Announcements
 - b. Review of August 2026 Business Meeting Agenda
 - c. Review and Approval of July 2026 Draft Business Meeting Minutes
2. Agency Updates (9:45 AM)
 - a. Office of Law Enforcement: Personnel, Recent Operations & Marine Fishery Incidents
 - b. Department of Fish and Game: Recent Meetings and Events and Department-wide Activities and Projects
 - c. Division of Marine Fisheries: Personnel, Recent Meetings and Events, and Agency Activities and Projects
3. Updates and Discussion Items (10:15 AM)
 - a. Emergency Regulations to Extend White Shark Fishing Restrictions
 - b. Quota Managed Species
 - c. Interstate Fisheries Management
 - d. Commercial Fisheries Commission
 - e. Seafood Marketing Update
 - f. Belding Award Nominations (Potential Action)
4. Presentations (11:00 AM)
 - a. Commercial Permitting and Discrimination on Basis of Residency
5. Other Business and Public Comment (11:30 AM)
6. Adjourn (11:45 AM)

All times provided are approximate and the meeting agenda is subject to change. The MFAC may amend the agenda at the start of the business meeting.

Next Meeting Date

October 22, 2026

SMASST East

New Bedford, MA

Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

Draft Business Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2026

Via Zoom

Attendees

Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission: Shelley Edmundson (Chair); Bill Doyle (Vice-Chair); Chris McGuire (Clerk); Ray Kane; Sooky Sawyer; Ray Jarvis; Willy Goldsmith; Eric Nelson; Bill Amaru.

Division of Marine Fisheries: Dan McKiernan, Director; Bob Glenn, Deputy Director; Story Reed, Deputy Director; Kevin Creighton, Assistant Director; Anna Webb, Assistant Director; Jared Silva; Bradlie Morgan; Nichola Meserve; Melanie Griffin; Kelly Whitmore; Brad Chase; Sarah Ferrera; Amanda Meli; Ben Gahagan; Brad Schondelmeier; Cara Litos; Elise Koob; Emma Fowler; Kerry Allard; Luke Putaansuu; Scott Schaffer; Steve Wilcox; Tracy Pugh; Leah Crowe; Wendy Wills.

Department of Fish and Game: Tom O'Shea, Commissioner; Sefatia Romeo Theken, Deputy Commissioner; Julia Hopkins.

Massachusetts Environmental Police: Colonel John Monaghan; Captain Jack Chapin.

Members of the Public: Beth Casoni, Stephanie Ridenour, Kate McGoldrick, Raymond Rowell

Call to Order and Routine Business

Chair Shelley Edmundson called the meeting to order and conducted roll call attendance.

Review of the July 2026 Business Meeting Agenda

Chair Edmundson asked if there were any amendments to the July 2026 business meeting agenda. There were no amendments.

Review and Approval of May 2026 Draft Business Meeting Minutes

The Chair sought amendments to the May 2026 draft business meeting minutes. No amendments were proposed. **The Chair called for a motion to approve the May 2026 Business Meeting Minutes as drafted. Sooky Sawyer made the motion and Bill Doyle seconded the motion. The Chair proceeded to a roll-call vote. The motion passed unanimously (7-0-2) with the Chair and Bill Amaru abstaining.**

Agency Updates

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

Captain Jack Chapin provided updates on behalf of the Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP). In addition to routine fisheries enforcement, MEP has been working details at Department of Conservation and Recreation parks and facilities. On the fisheries side, Chapin reported violations of striped bass filleting rules, routine patrols for compliance with the Vibrio Control Plan, and a recent surge in bluefin tuna fishing. There was also an investigation into the potential harvest of horseshoe crabs within the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge.

Department of Fish and Game: Recent Meetings and Events and Department-wide Activities and Projects

Commissioner Tom O'Shea discussed the impact of the recent sewage spill in Haverhill. This incident led to significant shellfish closures along the North Shore. He applauded the coordinated statewide response to addressing the emergency, including managing beach and shellfish closures, and fixing the leak. He thanked DMF for effectively responding to the crisis and working closely with harvesters and the Governor's office to ensure clear communication pathways. Governor Healey has allocated funding to allow DMF to provide financial compensation to impacted shellfish harvesters. Commissioner O'Shea added that this incident is a reminder of the importance and challenges related to rehabbing and upgrading aging infrastructure. The Deputy Commissioner concurred highlighting the important communications work to educate the public on shellfish safety.

O'Shea then recognized DMF for the continued progress on the new Habitat Restoration Center at the Cat Cove Marine Laboratory. He hoped the MFAC would be able to visit the site upon completion.

Division of Marine Fisheries: Personnel, Recent Meetings and Events, and Agency Activities and Projects

Director McKiernan applauded the administration's full-government response to the Haverhill sewage spill. Governor Healey's disaster relief program will support a \$300,000 fund for impacted harvesters. To aid in the program's development, the Governor has built a four-person panel — with one representative from each impacted town — to work with DMF to determine how to distribute relief funds. McKiernan added that most shellfish areas that closed have since reopened, but some areas of the Merrimack River still have degraded water quality, and these impacted shellfish areas will likely be closed for 21 days.

Dan then spoke on the MFAC's role in quota management and optimizing availability and income for harvesters. He anticipated that residency will increasingly become a relevant issue as DMF and the MFAC grapple with permitting challenges, particularly as it relates to further limiting access to the commercial striped bass fishery and renewing the North Shore Sea Scallop Pilot Program. With regards to the commercial striped bass fishery, the DMF has been working through the MFAC's Striped Bass Focus Group and ad-hoc industry advisors to begin to build the framework for a limited entry program.

Action on Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog Management Recommendation

Director McKiernan introduced DMF's recommendation to modernize the commercial surf clam and ocean quahog dredge fishery. Jared Silva shared that DMF's recommendation included: (1) updating the spatial management program; (2) mandating the use of vessel trackers by active fishery participants; (3) rescinding the night closure from February 1–April 30 annually; and (4) adopting streamlined and consistent regulatory language throughout the section that will not result in any modifications to existing rules.

Specific to the spatial management program, DMF recommended: (1) eliminating the seasonal contour line closure approach and replacing it with a year-round polygon closure south of Hull that is defined by GPS coordinates and is a proxy for the 12' depth contour but uses straight lines seaward of the 12' depth contour in areas with limited resource (e.g., Buzzards Bay, Vineyard Sound) and is inclusive of a 200' buffer zone around all eel grass beds mapped by the Department of Environmental Protection, as well as all existing regulatory closure and exemption area; (2) adopting two seasonal May 1–October 15 closures in Cape Cod Bay by expanding the existing seasonal Cape

Cod Bay closure off Manomet to the east to Dennis and adopting a new closure off Herring Cove to ameliorate user group and gear conflicts, and protect aggregations of large egg-bearing lobster and new shell lobsters in Cape Cod Bay; (3) retaining the existing year-round closure north of Point Allerton in Hull; and (4) creating a public process to adjust polygon closure coordinates, open areas north of Hull to fishing, and create temporary closures to address user conflicts.

The rationale behind the polygon management approach is it will enhance enforcement and compliance, protect important inshore habitat (e.g., eelgrass), allow continued use of historically fished areas, minimize user group conflict, be accessible to vessel operators and owners, and enable DMF to adjust and evolve boundaries through public comment and MFAC approval. Silva outlined public comments and suggestions that were considered but ultimately were not incorporated into the current management approach and polygon areas. However, these can be considered for modification in the future.

With regards to vessel monitoring, DMF was recommending that by January 1, 2027 all permit holders who intend to actively participate in the commercial surf clam and ocean quahog dredge fishery obtain, install, activate, and maintain a DMF-approved electronic vessel tracking device. At present, the sole approved device is Viatrax Boat Command. This vessel monitoring device would be required to remain on and operable at all times unless otherwise explicitly authorized in writing by the DMF Director. Permit holders could place their Surf Clam/Ocean Quahog Dredge Endorsement on an "Endorsement Only Permit" to opt out of the commercial surf clam and ocean quahog dredge fishery and resulting monitoring requirements. This requirement would allow for real-time enforcement and compliance with the spatial management program and would notify vessels when they enter or exit a polygon. Individual data is stored with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) and is held confidential.

Additionally, DMF recommended the commercial surf clam and ocean quahog dredge fishery be exempt from night closures during the period of February 1- April 30. This would allow greater access to fishing grounds during the wintertime when gear conflict is limited, seasonally prevent vessels from "jogging" at night, and is not expected to undermine the spatial management program which will be enforceable through vessel tracking.

Silva shared housekeeping recommendations to rewrite the commercial surf clam and ocean quahog permit requirement and incidental catch restriction regulations, and to adopt more consistent regulatory language throughout the surf clam and ocean quahog catch restriction and contaminated bait fishery regulations. This would improve readability of the regulation and streamline regulatory language without modifying existing regulatory requirements.

Chris McGuire asked about the state's eelgrass monitoring process and how updated eelgrass distribution data would be incorporated into polygons. Bob Glenn explained that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and partners perform regular statewide eelgrass monitoring and updated reports are developed every 3-5 years. Silva added that changes in eelgrass distribution and habitat protection will be considered in future boundary adjustments.

Silva and McGuire then discussed the system used to notify vessels, DMF, and MEP when a vessel enters or exits a polygon. Silva explained that enforcement is able to determine when fishing activity is occurring based on vessel speed and orientation, so violations will be clear. Confidential data sharing agreements between DMF and MEP allow some data to be shared as necessary for enforcement.

Director McKiernan and Silva noted that there will be limited tolerance for spatial management violations under this new program. Director McKiernan added that polygon location and boundaries will be subject to change as necessary. He spoke on the benefits of the program, including enhanced compliance.

The Chair moved for a motion. **Bill Doyle made a motion to adopt the recommendation as presented. Ray Kane seconded the motion. The Chair proceeded to a roll call vote and the motion passed unanimously (7-0-2), with the Chair abstaining and Bill Amaru not present for the vote.**

Updates and Discussion Items

North Shore Sea Scallop Pilot Program

Silva then updated the MFAC on DMF's North Shore Sea Scallop Pilot Program. Initiated this past winter, this program allowed vessels to dredge for scallops within two discrete, previously closed areas along the North Shore (Salem Sound and Gloucester) during the period of February 15–April 30.

This responded to an industry request to expand seasonal scallop access given the lack of potential for gear conflicts with the Seasonal Trap Gear Closure. DMF developed the programmatic criteria and access areas with consideration given to habitat, archaeological resources, spawning cod aggregations, and the interests of other stakeholders.

31 permit holders enrolled and 21 actively participated. The 21 active permit holders took 262 trips with some activity occurring in the exemption areas and landed an estimated 27,000 pounds of scallop meat valued at approximately \$690,000 on these trips. In general, the program provided mostly local North Shore day boats with

opportunities to dredge for scallops before the federal Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) fishery opened on April 1 and some vessels continued to fish the exemption areas after the NGOM closure. DMF is now evaluating options to potentially renew this program in 2027.

Referring back to McKiernan's earlier comments, Silva explained the 2026 pilot program provided access only to resident boats, but legal challenges were raised objecting to this restriction. DMF hoped to bring in legal counsel to discuss the legal challenges related to residency discrimination in commercial fisheries at the August MFAC meeting.

Commercial Striped Bass Permitting

Nichola Meserve provided the MFAC with an update of DMF's ongoing development of a framework to further reduce access to the commercial striped bass fishery by 2028. This action is being pursued to reduce latent effort, implement mandatory harvester tagging by 2029, and better align fishery participation with stock conditions to preserve fishing opportunities for historic harvesters. To facilitate the development of this potential permitting action, DMF has worked through MFAC's Striped Bass Focus Group and an ad-hoc panel of industry advisors to solicit advice on an activity filter to use alongside the December 31, 2025 control date to reduce the number of permit holders; establish a novel exit:entry program to facilitate permit turnover; and consider an owner operator requirement. DMF will reconvene the MFAC Striped Bass Focus Group later this year with the intent of presenting the MFAC with a public hearing proposal by the end of 2026. This schedule will allow DMF to hold public hearings by the spring of 2027, inform permit holders and address appeals and other permit issues that will inevitably arise throughout the summer of 2027, and have a final list of permit holders eligible for renewal in 2028 by the fall of 2027.

Nichola reminded the MFAC that DMF adopted an interim limited entry permitting approach, by restricting 2026 renewals to only those who held a permit in 2024 or 2025. DMF also made the permit non-transferable and updated the control date to December 31, 2025 to streamline the potential permitting actions being considered for 2028.

Eric Nelson expressed support for reducing the number of commercial participants in the fishery. He voiced concern about other issues, such as non-residents participating in the fishery and the status of the striped bass population moving forward.

Sooky Sawyer asked how this framework would impact shore-based anglers. Meserve explained that this is still being discussed and would likely require the application of different thresholds for shore-anglers versus vessel-based anglers.

Ray Jarvis shared concerns from anglers who would not be able to retain their commercial striped bass fishing permit under the new rules. This is of particular concern along the South Cape and South Coast where local seasonal availability and the timing of the commercial fishing season have had a preclusive effect on participation in recent years.

Jarvis asked whether 2026 landings would be considered for future permit viability. Meserve explained that 2026 activity falls after the control date so it will not be considered for future permit retention. However, previous landings (including 2026 and 2027) may be considered in future permit acquisition under the prospective exit:entry permit turn-over program.

Jarvis and Meserve discussed the anecdotal experiences of anglers finding fewer striped bass than previous seasons. Meserve noted that these observations are supported by the recent stock assessment. She did not anticipate any additional proposed management changes through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) until 2027.

Willy Goldsmith asked about the number of shore-based fishing endorsements. Meserve and Anna Webb explained that they did not have the specific number on hand but noted that commercial permits and landings are overwhelmingly vessel-based.

Federal Fisheries Management

Melanie Griffin provided a routine update on the June 2026 New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) meeting and a brief overview of the expected agenda for the upcoming September 2026 NEFMC meeting.

Efforts are underway for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to streamline their review of annual species specifications. As part of this, NOAA recommends NEFMC use so-called “clean specifications” by packaging standalone species specifications and not bundle them with other management actions.

In June, the NEFMC initiated specifications for Atlantic herring (2027–2031), Atlantic sea scallop (2027 and 2028 default measures), northeast multi-species groundfish (2027–2031), and whiting (2027–2031), as well as separate management actions for Atlantic herring and sea scallop. For Atlantic herring this included provisions to address river herring and shad bycatch and modifications to the specification and quota carryover processes. For Atlantic sea scallop this included the potential development of sub-areas within the Northern Gulf of Maine region and regional Days-At-Sea allocations.

Additionally, the NEFMC made final decisions on several issues. Atlantic sea scallop Research Set Aside (RSA) 2027 and 2028 priorities were set. NEFMC also recommended the administrative removal of the Georges Bank Dedicated Habitat Research Area (DHRA).

The Council finalized its risk policy at the June meeting, including five factors—stock status, recruitment, climate variability, recreational fishery characterization, and commercial fishery characterization. These factors are weighted based on relative importance and scored for each fishery. Risk policy will be used for the first time in September 2026.

On monkfish and skates, the NEFMC reviewed catch-per-unit effort, continued discussions on the development of individual fishing quotas, and requested alterations to NOAA Fisheries for modifications to the Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan to address negative socio-economic impacts.

Looking forward to September, the NEFMC is expected to finalize Atlantic herring specifications, the strategic plan to implement small mesh specifications, and Framework 2 to address essential fish habitat. Additionally, the Council will receive reports on vessel baseline evaluations for the groundfish fishery and regional stock prioritization for specification.

Lastly, for the sea scallop fishery, the NEFMC will continue to work on prioritizing potential Northern Edge access, permit stacking, and strategic plan goals for the sea scallop fishery; vessel monitoring in the Atlantic herring fishery; and habitat exemption area proposals for groundfish and clam dredges.

Director McKiernan added that the surf clam fleet has been working with NEFMC to obtain more access to sandy bottom within the habitat management area closure on Nantucket Shoals.

Sooky Sawyer voiced concern about the lack of lobster interests on the NEFMC and the Council's pending work to prioritize opening the Northern Edge. Griffin explained that the NEFMC decided not to move forward with this opening in 2024, citing potential impact on lobsters. She described two potential processes if the federal administration moves forward with Northern Edge access and permit stacking—through NEFMC processes or through secretarial amendments. This issue will be discussed further in September.

Quota Managed Species

Anna Webb provided the MFAC with a review of permitting, landings, values, and trends in 2025 of fishery resources landed in Massachusetts, which include federal and state managed fisheries.

Overall, total state landings have declined over the past several years and 2025 ex-vessel value increased slightly. Webb provided an update on overall trends in fishery performance for sea scallop, American lobster, Eastern oyster, and groundfish.

Webb then transitioned to the performance of the 2026 quota managed fisheries.

Menhaden

The fishery is following 2025 trends. There was a decrease in quota in 2026 compared to 2025, and as of early July, 70.2% of the quota was landed. The trip limit dropped from 120,000 pounds to 25,000 pounds on June 8 once 50% of the quota was taken. 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. Ex-vessel value is trending closely to previous years, and price has steadily increased over time.

Striped Bass

Striped bass quota has remained consistent at about 600,000 pounds since 2024. As of July 9, 34.8% of the 2026 quota had been taken. Landings are tracking closely to 2025 despite some variability in landings between weeks. If more than 30% of the quota remains on August 1, Thursday will become an open fishing day. If any quota remains on October 1, the fishery will be open Monday – Friday. Ex-vessel value is slightly higher than 2025.

Bluefish

As of July 9, 2.3% of quota had been landed, and there is no projected closure date for 2026 yet. Landings are tracking closely to 2025 and ex-vessel value is higher than in 2025.

Summer Flounder

The quota increased to just over 1 million pounds in 2026. Around 18% of quota was landed in Period I (January 1 – April 22). As of July 9, 25.6% of quota was landed. At present, there is no projected closure date for 2026. There are several pending triggers. Most likely, the trip limit will increase to 1,000 pounds on September 1, as at least 20% of the quota will remain. However, if 75% of quota is taken before August 15, the trip limit decreases to 400 pounds for draggers and 250 for hook and liners and if 90% is taken before September 1, then the trip limit decreases to 200 pounds for all gear types. Ex-vessel value is tracking closely to 2022 and 2023, and monthly value is varying slightly.

Bait Horseshoe Crab

Landings are trending slightly slower than in recent years. As of July 9, 26.8% of quota has been landed. If 80% is taken on or before September 15, trip limits decrease from 300 to 200 crabs. If 50% of quota remains on August 1, trip limits increase to 400 crabs. Price remains similar to previous years, though ex-vessel value is slightly lower due to lower landings.

Black Sea Bass

The fishery opened on July 1. Quota increased to about 1 million pounds 2026 and 2.6% has been reported landed as of July 9. In terms of ex-vessel value, early data show a relatively high price for the month of July.

Scup

Landings are tracking similarly to previous years, and ex-vessel value is slightly higher than 2023.

Jared Silva reminded the MFAC that the multi-day pilot program for scup and black sea bass pot fisheries started on July 1 given the abundance of quota available to the state and the likelihood the fishery will last into the fall even with an increase in summertime landings. Additionally, scup fishing days and trip limits increased in 2026.

Period II Summer Flounder Pilot Program

Silva shared updates to the Period II summer flounder pilot program with the MFAC. The program has recently been expanded to include offshore draggers who do not hold a Coastal Access Permit (CAP) to facilitate quota utilization.

On background, the pilot program was initiated in 2019 to allow inshore day boats to operate more efficiently given the shift of fluke distribution, fuel and dockage costs, and loss of a buy boat in Nantucket, where vessels could previously offload. Historically, participating boats were required to hold a CAP with relevant species-specific endorsements in an effort to restrict access to dayboats and limit participation in federal waters. However, as fish distribution shifts offshore and the quota has increased, the CAP requirement has been removed to accommodate more offshore landings.

DMF is interested in engaging with the industry and the MFAC to revise this program for 2027 to consider changing effort in the Period II summer flounder fishery. Director McKiernan added that it would be beneficial to hear from vessels outside the dayboat fishery, including vessels fishing in federal waters.

Presentations

Protected Species Program, Right Whale Research, and On-Demand Gear

Deputy Director Bob Glenn provided the MFAC with a presentation on the work conducted by the agency's protected species program. This presentation addressed: (1) passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) for right whales and early season (December/January) detections in Cape Cod Bay this past winter; (2) the 2025–2026 aerial surveillance program for right whales and the need to bolster the number of early season flights this winter to verify passive acoustic monitoring findings; (3) joint DMF and MEP efforts to remove fixed gear from the Massachusetts Restricted Area; (4) DMF's derelict fishing gear removal and disposal program; (5) experimental fishing with on-demand gear; (6) an analysis of the right whale entangled in Massachusetts lobster trap gear this past January; and (7) expectations and uncertainty Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team rule-making.

Glenn explained that the detections of right whales by the real-time acoustic buoys generally aligned with the timing of the seasonal fixed gear closures. However, whales were detected as early as November in Cape Cod Bay. What remains unclear is the density of whales that arrived in the early winter and whether this is part of a long-term shift in local abundance or an outlier. To get a better sense of whale density in late-fall and early winter, the Center for Coastal Studies (CCS) will be contracted to conduct

additional flights during this period in the coming years. Additionally, 17 archival passive acoustic monitoring sites were deployed and data are being processed.

Director McKiernan clarified that the Cape Cod Bay real-time acoustic monitoring buoy was not functioning in early February 2026 – mid-March 2026, so no detections were found.

The right whale surveillance program, conducted in partnership with CCS, identified 188 unique individuals along Cape Cod Bay, Massachusetts Bay, Jeffreys Ledge, and Outer Cape Cod. Glenn noted that the whales were more widely dispersed in 2026 than they have been historically.

DMF partnered with MEP to remove derelict gear from the Restricted Area Closure in Cape Cod Bay. 245 buoy lines and 625 traps were removed in 2026. Administrative actions including warning letters and permit sanctions are issued in response to observed non-compliance.

The derelict fishing gear removal and disposal program has removed 42,000 pounds of derelict gear in 2026. Glenn credited Senator Bruce Tarr for allocating \$50,000 to assist in the removal and disposal of this gear through providing dumpsters to at certain North Shore locations.

DMF has obtained an On-Demand Exempted Fishing Permit from NOAA Fisheries to allow commercial lobster permit holders to access the Seasonal Trap Closure with on-demand gear in 2026. Two participants joined in 2026 and Glenn expects additional participants in 2027. Further, the state's On-Demand Grant Program allows fixed gear fishermen to be awarded gear to participate in on-demand fishery. Additionally, both fixed and mobile gear fishers may use the grant to obtain equipment to visualize on-demand gear on the seafloor.

Glenn then reported on a right whale entanglement in Massachusetts' waters off Provincetown this past January. CCS attempted an entanglement response. The gear analysis report showed that the gear was compliant with state regulations. The whale has since been resighted and NOAA Fisheries has made a preliminary determination that this entanglement will be classified as a "serious injury".

The schedule for Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan regulation development will be released this fall with the expectation of adopting new regulations by January 1, 2029. However, there is some uncertainty regarding this rule making given unknowns regarding the necessary level of risk reduction and changes in North Atlantic right whale morality and birth rates.

Sawyer asked about the status of the state's Incidental Take Permit application. Glenn explained that NOAA is not able to give DMF an Incidental Take Permit.

Sawyer and Glenn then discussed the shifting distribution of Calanus plankton and how this may impact when and where right whales occur. Glenn will update the MFAC on the most recent research into this question at a future meeting.

Chris McGuire asked about how the 2025-2026 season compares to previous years. Glenn and Director McKiernan explained that the presence of right whales in Cape Cod Bay in November was surprising. However, flight hours have been historically limited in early winter in an attempt to prioritize monitoring when whales were likely present in state waters, so there is not a robust baseline of comparative data.

McGuire and Glenn then discussed the history of gear closures. And McGuire asked about process for adjusting gear closures in response to right whale distribution. Glenn and McKiernan indicated that they want both a more robust time series of data regarding the presence and absence of right whales during the early winter months and a better understanding of risk reduction goals before considering any additional management action. McKiernan opined that if management is warranted, he wants to look at the single trap fishery first. Based on derelict gear removals this past year, he thinks the small boat fishers who deploy this gear can lose the ability to fish quickly in the winter as the weather turns resulting in the inability to remove gear by February 1 and they may benefit from an earlier season closure.

Sooky Sawyer asked about NOAA Fisheries' risk reduction goals. Glenn explained that these are in progress but have not yet been shared with state management. Glenn and Sawyer voiced concern over this.

Diadromous Fisheries Project and Opening Herring Runs

Brad Chase presented on the 2026 opening of the Herring River in Harwich to the harvest of river herring. This is the first run in the state to be opened under an ASMFC-approved sustainable fishery management plan and is the first to be opened in 22 years. The fishery targeted a harvest of 3% of the time-series median and accommodated 150 permits, seven open fishing days, and a 20-fish bag limit with trip ticket requirements. Ultimately, Harwich sold about 130 permits resulting in a total harvest of 4,405 herring (~1% the time-series median). The harvest required collaboration across DMF, Town of Harwich, MEP, and interested harvesters.

Harwich is considering renewing the program for 2027 with an allowance for down-running harvest. The Nemasket River (Middleborough/Lakeville), Herring Brooke (Pembroke), and Stony Brook (Brewster) are also considering allowing harvest under a sustainable fishery management plan.

Bill Amaru thanked DMF and Chase for their work at the Harwich site.

Ray Kane asked about downrunners. Chase spoke on the interest in some harvesters in targeting downrunners for striped bass bait. These would be harvested later in the season, when river herring are swimming downstream after spawning.

Other Business and Public Comment

Bill Amaru spoke to the Department of Agriculture's new Office of Fisheries. He suggested drafting letters to the new office to advocate for issues of importance in Massachusetts and New England.

Amaru then remarked on the positive consequences of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, such as supporting certain fisheries. He hoped that the discussions on adaptive and holistic management within the NEFMC will enable management to respond more quickly to fishery issues, particularly concerning groundfish.

Amaru thanked DMF for increasing access to the scup quota in June noting it made the fishery more profitable for some participants.

Director McKiernan added that the Commercial Fisheries Commission is meeting later this week, where the head of the Office of Seafood will be presenting. He welcomed MFAC members to join in-person or virtually.

Ray Kane asked about knobbed whelk management. Dan indicated that Domenic Santoro's petition is being analyzed and DMF will address whelk management at a meeting later this year.

Chairwoman Edmundson noted that the Martha's Vineyard Fishermen's Preservation Trust's Meet the Fleet event will take place in Menemsha on August 6.

The Chair then invited public comment.

Beth Casoni of the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association (MLA) thanked MFAC and DMF for their efforts on surf clam and ocean quahog management changes, as these will be appreciated by the lobster industry. MLA is concerned about delayed Take Reduction Plan goals. She asked DMF to advocate for recognizing lobstermen's previous conservation efforts through these goals.

Raymond Rowell thanked DMF for the surf clam regulations. He clarified his earlier public comment and expressed interest in how the state may – in the future – move to amend polygons to increase fishing access.

Adjourn

There were no further comments. **The Chair moved for a motion to adjourn. Ray Kane made the motion to adjourn. Bill Amaru seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.**

Upcoming Meetings

August 26, 2026 in Weston, MA

Meeting Materials

- July 14, 2026 MFAC Business Meeting Agenda
- May 28, 2026 MFAC Draft Business Meeting Minutes
- Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog Management Recommendations
- 2025 Sea Scallop Pilot Program Update Memo
- Commercial Striped Bass Permitting Update Memo
- Summer Flounder Period II Consecutive Daily Trip Limit Program Memo



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Marine Fisheries
(617) 626-1520 | mass.gov/MarineFisheries



Maura T. Healey
Governor

Kimberly Driscoll
Lt. Governor

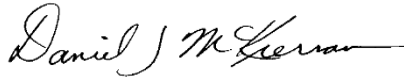
Rebecca L. Tepper
Secretary

Thomas K. O'Shea
Commissioner

Daniel J. McKiernan
Director

Memorandum

To: Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC)

From: Daniel J. McKiernan, Director 

Date: August 20, 2026

Subject: **Emergency Rules to Extend Shore-Based Shark Fishing Rules to Town of Nantucket**

Overview

On July 31, 2026, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) – with the approval of the Commissioner and the Healey Administration – filed emergency regulations to restrict rod-and-reel fishing activity targeting white sharks. This amendment to a 2025 rule extends existing shore-based shark fishing rules to the Town of Nantucket (Figure 1). These rules prohibit shore-based anglers from fishing terminal tackle that contains a metal or wire leader 18 inches or greater affixed to a hook with a gape of 5/8 inch or greater. This rule will remain in effect for 90-days.

Background

It is DMF's position that shore-based fishing for white sharks uses baits to attract white sharks closer to shore where it increases the likelihood of an interaction with swimmers, surfers, and other beachgoers. This presents an unnecessary public safety risk. Further, existing rules prohibit attracting and

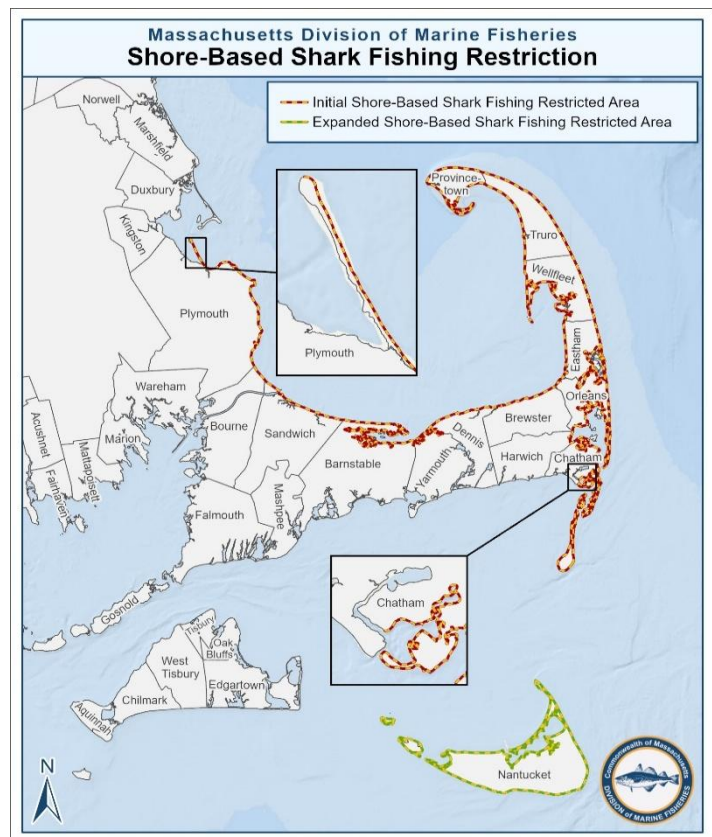


Fig. 1. Spatial Extent of Shore-Based Shark Fishing Gear Restrictions Regulation

capturing white sharks and require the release of the animal as expediently as possible upon incidental capture.

In recent years (prior to 2025), there were a series of incidents around Cape Cod that documented anglers were likely violating existing state regulations prohibiting attracting and capturing white sharks. This included social media posts documenting individuals travelling to Massachusetts to fish for white sharks from Cape Cod beaches and local media reports of individuals attempting to target white sharks among surfers.

This demonstrated that existing rules may be inadequate and challenging to enforce. Therefore, for 2025, DMF implemented new regulations to prohibit shore-based anglers from fishing with terminal tackle that contain a metal or wire leader 18 inches or greater affixed to a hook with a gap of 5/8 inch or greater from the coastline beginning at Plymouth Point and extending around Cape Cod Bay and the eastern shore of the Cape to Stage Harbor in Chatham (including all of Monomoy Island). Through conversations with shark researchers and shark anglers, DMF identified that this gear restriction would effectively limit the use of heavy gear capable of catching white sharks while adequately allowing shore-based shark fishing for other popular species (e.g., brown sharks, dusky sharks, sand bar sharks). The spatial extent of this rule was also designed to target only those areas where acoustic data demonstrates white sharks are most common. Additionally, DMF adopted two additional rules to address public safety associated with shark fishing (and presumptive white shark fishing) and this included prohibiting shore-based chumming during daylight hours and prohibiting deploying bait with mechanized or compressed propulsion or remote-controlled devices.

The purpose of the gear restriction rule was to prohibit the type of gear anglers would use to fish for white sharks in areas where white sharks are most readily available. DMF anticipated this would enhance enforcement and compliance by establishing a clear-cut gear prohibition and eliminating the need for the Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP) to demonstrate the fishing activity was not just routine recreational fishing activity but being done with the intent to attract or capture white sharks.

Nantucket was excluded from the 2025 gear restriction rule. While there have been observations of white sharks off Nantucket, they occur mostly during the early summer months when these sharks begin to migrate into our waters. Further, there is a popular and historic shore-based shark fishery on the island and little evidence suggested these anglers were targeting white sharks.

Rationale

By mid-June 2026, it had become evident that anglers had modified their fishing strategy and were beginning to target white sharks on Nantucket. This was documented by social media posts, reports from MEP of anglers traveling by ferry to the island with heavy rod and reel gear and deploying large baits (including whole striped bass) to target white sharks, and this resulted in calls from concerned locals. DMF monitored the situation and was in regular contact with MEP.

On July 20, 2026 the Nantucket Harbormaster and Police Chief submitted written correspondence requesting the agency expand its existing shore-based shark fishing gear restrictions to Nantucket. They explained that throughout the early summer they observed a rise in anglers deploying large baits on heavy gear to target white sharks in close proximity to swimmers, surfers, paddleboarders, and other beachgoers and there had been a shark bite incident that occurred while individuals were engaged in shark fishing. Further, on July 16, they were forced to enact a public safety closure for Nobadeer Beach – one of the islands most popular public beaches – for several midday hours during a heat wave because an angler was deploying large baits to target white sharks (and create a viral social media post) among beachgoers and adjacent to surfing instruction activity.

I felt that the situation emerging on Nantucket was consistent with the justification for adopting the shore-based gear restrictions on Cape Cod last year. Shore-based white shark fishing activity is not allowed under current state-wide regulations, is incompatible with public safety, and the reckless behavior of certain individuals was likely exacerbating the situation. Accordingly, using the emergency authority given to the Director by the statute, I drafted a proposed amendment to the shore-based gear restrictions that specifically included the Town of Nantucket and these regulations were quickly approved for implementation by the Commissioner and the Administration.

Additional Considerations

These emergency regulations are set to expire after 90-days on October 31, 2026. I do not intend to go out to public hearing immediately to extend these rules beyond the initial 90-day period. Rather, I am tasking my staff to conduct extensive outreach and develop potential amendments to the state's shark fishing rules for 2027 to ensure white shark fishing is adequately prohibited and public safety is preserved. This includes a September 10, 2026, public meeting on Nantucket to discuss this year's emergency regulations and potential future regulatory actions, as well as meetings with various surfcasting organizations. I aim to return to the MFAC with a public hearing proposal at a late fall or early winter business meeting with the goal of including that proposal in our winter regulatory package for potential implementation by May 1, 2027.

Attachments

July 20, 2026 Letter from Nantucket Police Chief

July 20, 2026 Letter from Nantucket Harbormaster

Town of Nantucket Police Department

Jody D. Kasper
Chief of Police

Charles Gibson
Deputy Chief of Police



4 Fairgrounds Road
Nantucket, Massachusetts
02554-2804

Telephone (508) 228-1212
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www.nantucket-ma.gov

July 21, 2026

Director McKiernan
251 Causeway Street, Suite 400
Boston, MA 02744

RE: Heavy fishing gear restriction request

Dear Director McKiernan,

I am writing on behalf of the Nantucket Police Department to respectfully request that the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries expand the recreational great white shark fishing gear restrictions currently in effect on Cape Cod to Nantucket as soon as possible.

Nantucket is experiencing the same public safety concerns that prompted the adoption of these restrictions on Cape Cod. Because the regulations do not currently apply on Nantucket, individuals are intentionally traveling to the island to target great white sharks using gear configurations that are prohibited elsewhere. This regulatory inconsistency has made Nantucket an attractive destination for this activity and has resulted in anglers fishing from some of our busiest public beaches during the height of the summer season.

The Nantucket Police Department is not seeking to restrict lawful recreational fishing. Our concern is the intentional attraction of great white sharks into waters immediately adjacent to heavily populated public beaches. During the summer months, thousands of residents and visitors use these beaches each day for swimming, surfing, paddleboarding, and other recreational activities. Deliberately deploying bait or chum in these areas unnecessarily increases the risk to the public, creates avoidable safety hazards, and places an additional burden on lifeguards, the Harbormaster's Office, and other first responders.

We have already experienced the consequences of this activity. On July 16, 2026, the poor judgment of an angler who deployed chum while targeting great white sharks from a public beach resulted in the closure of one of Nantucket's busiest beaches for approximately two hours to protect public safety. Incidents such as this disrupt recreational activities, affect local businesses and visitors, and require the commitment of significant public safety resources.

The rationale for the existing Cape Cod restrictions applies equally to Nantucket. Extending those same gear restrictions to the island would eliminate the current regulatory gap, discourage this activity from relocating to Nantucket, promote consistent enforcement, and provide an important safeguard for the thousands of people who enjoy our beaches each summer.

Town of Nantucket Police Department

Jody D. Kasper
Chief of Police

Charles Gibson
Deputy Chief of Police



4 Fairgrounds Road
Nantucket, Massachusetts
02554-2804

Telephone (508) 228-1212
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On behalf of the Nantucket Police Department, I respectfully request that the Division of Marine Fisheries initiate the regulatory process to extend the existing Cape Cod recreational great white shark fishing gear restrictions to Nantucket as soon as practicable.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your continued commitment to protecting both Massachusetts' marine resources and public safety.

Regards,


Chief Jody Kasper



Director, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

20 Jul 2026

Dear Director McKiernan,

I am writing on behalf of the Nantucket Harbormaster's Office to respectfully request that the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries expand the existing recreational great white shark fishing gear restrictions currently in effect on Cape Cod to include Nantucket as soon as possible.

The absence of these restrictions on Nantucket has created an unintended regulatory gap that is now drawing anglers to the island specifically because the gear configurations they use are prohibited on Cape Cod. As a result, we are seeing individuals targeting great white sharks from some of Nantucket's busiest public beaches during the height of the summer season.

This activity presents a significant and growing public safety concern. Many of these anglers are deploying large bait and fishing gear in close proximity to areas heavily utilized by swimmers, surfers, paddleboarders, and families. While we fully recognize that great white sharks are naturally present in the waters surrounding Nantucket, we are deeply concerned that the use of bait and chum to intentionally target these animals may draw them closer to shore and into areas of concentrated public recreation.

Our concerns are no longer hypothetical. We have already experienced a shark bite incident that occurred while individuals were actively engaged in this type of shark fishing activity on one of our public beaches. Although sharks are a natural part of our marine environment, the deliberate attraction of these sharks into heavily populated recreational waters creates an unacceptable level of risk for the public and significantly increases the burden placed on first responders responsible for ensuring beach safety.

On July 16, our office responded to an incident at one of Nantucket's most heavily visited beaches after an individual was actively deploying bait and targeting great white sharks while filming the activity for social media. This occurred immediately adjacent to a surf school preparing to enter the water with a class of nine students and within close proximity to a staffed lifeguard stand. This beach usually has 1,500 to 3,000 patrons during the summer season.

In response, the Harbormaster's Office, in coordination with public safety personnel, made the decision to close the beach for approximately two hours. While this action was necessary to protect public safety, it significantly disrupted recreational activities, impacted the surf school's operations, and affected thousands of residents and visitors. These consequences were the direct

result of the intentional targeting of great white sharks in the immediate vicinity of one of Nantucket's busiest public beaches.

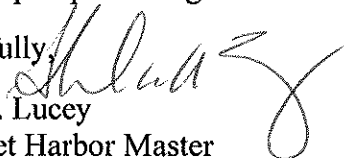
The current regulations on Cape Cod recognize the unique public safety concerns associated with this activity. Unfortunately, those same concerns now exist on Nantucket, and the absence of comparable restrictions has effectively shifted the activity from Cape Cod to our shores. Individuals are openly acknowledging that they are coming to Nantucket because the gear restrictions that apply on Cape Cod do not apply here.

We strongly believe that this regulatory inconsistency should be addressed as soon as practicable. Extending the existing Cape Cod gear restrictions to Nantucket would promote consistency in enforcement, eliminate the incentive to relocate this activity to the island, and provide a reasonable and necessary measure to protect public safety while maintaining responsible management of the Commonwealth's marine resources.

We respectfully request that the Division of Marine Fisheries initiate the regulatory process to expand these restrictions to Nantucket as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of this important public safety matter and for your continued partnership in protecting both Massachusetts' marine resources and the people who enjoy them.

Respectfully,


Sheila A. Lucey
Nantucket Harbor Master

Emergency Shark Fishing Regs

Emergency Action

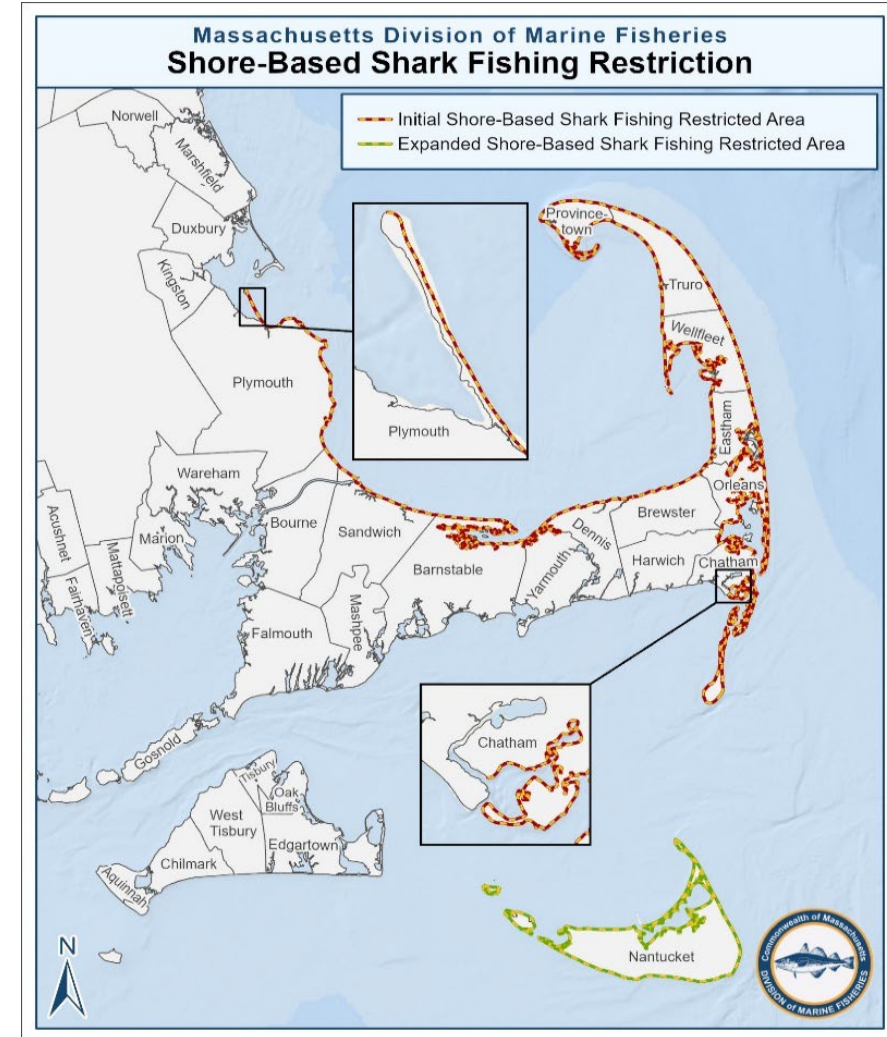
- Extends prohibition on certain terminal tackle combination – a metal or wire leader exceeding 18 inches length to a hook with a gape exceeding 5/8” – when shore fishing to Town of Nantucket.

Rationale

- Nantucket exempt from initial (2025) rule due to limited observations of white sharks off Nantucket’s shoreline, little evidence to suggest anglers were targeting white sharks, and popular shore based fishery for other species.
- This year it became apparent that fishing behavior was evolving and anglers were actively targeting white sharks from Nantucket beaches.
- Targeting white sharks prompted public safety concerns and beach closures documented in letters from Nantucket Harbormaster and Police Chief.
- Gear prohibition designed to curb use of tackle that would be used to target white sharks while leaving gear used to target other shark species unaffected.

Next Steps

- Will hold public meeting on Nantucket on September 10
- Intend to allow emergency rule to expire, but will consider regulatory amendments to shark fishing rules for 2027.



2026 Quota Managed Species Update

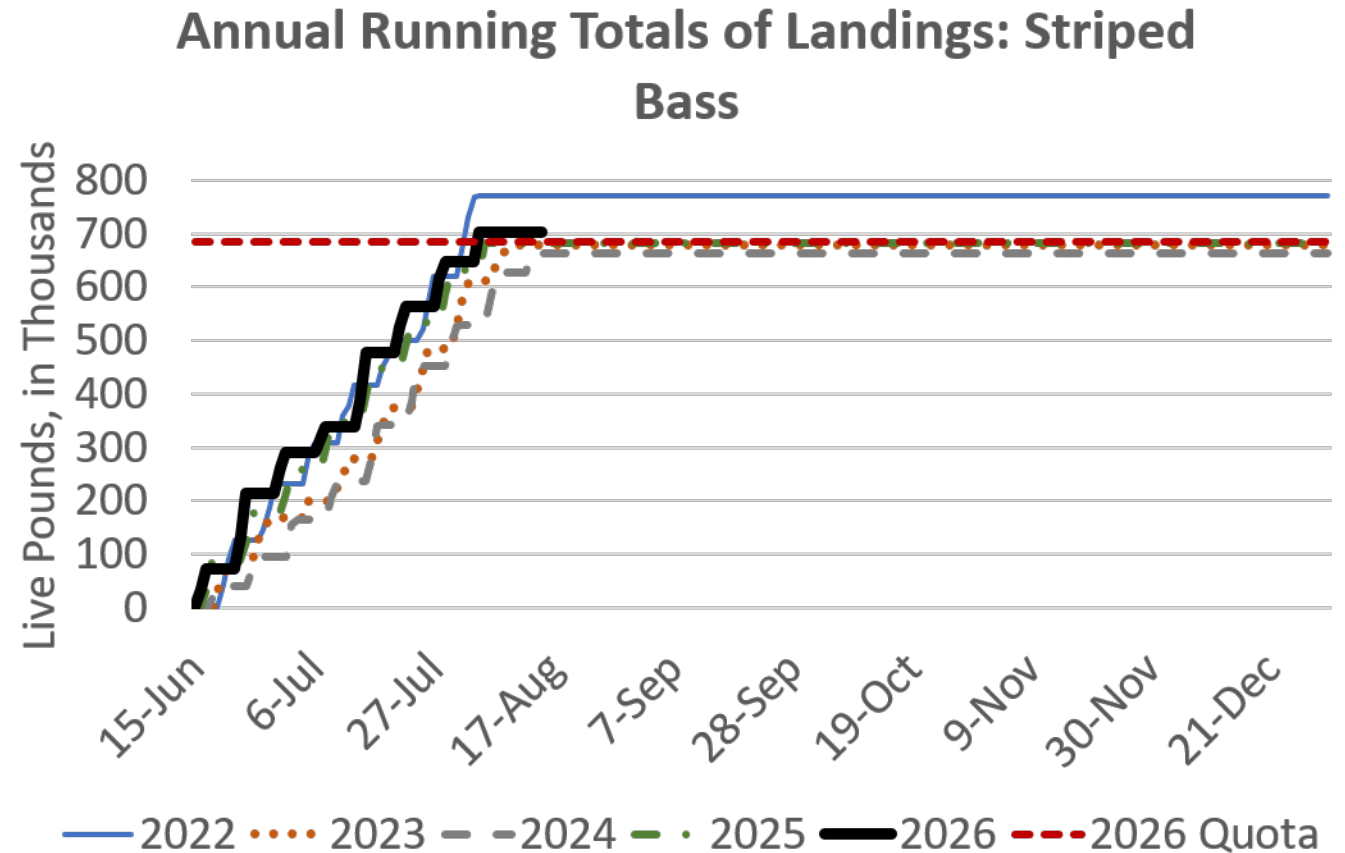
Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission meeting, 8/26/2026

Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/26. 2026 data are preliminary and subject to change. Results are shown through week ending 8/15/26.



Striped Bass: Landings

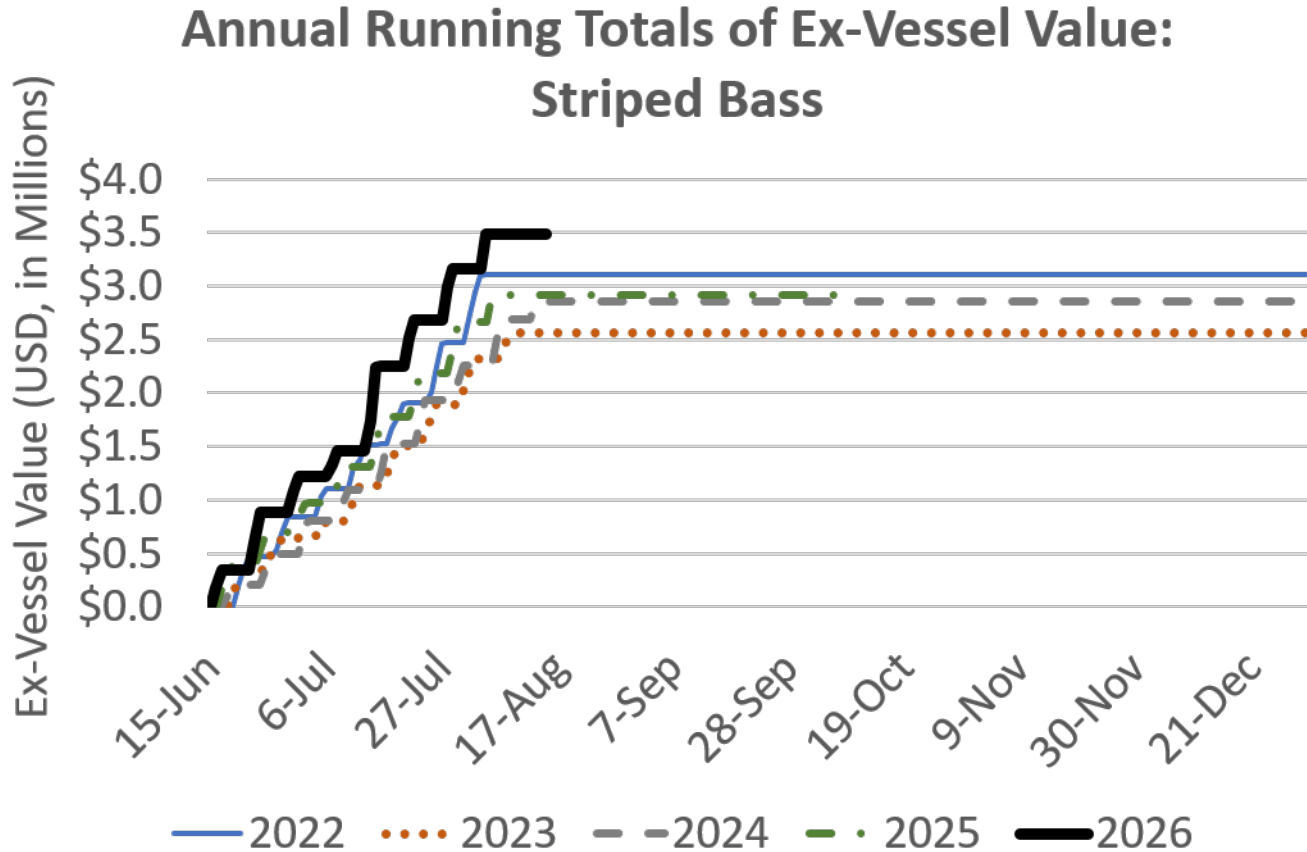
- Quota decreased in 2024
- 2026 Fishery closed 8/5
 - 15 open days
- Estimated landings are approximately 103% of the quota
 - Highly variable weeks made predicting the closure difficult.



Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026



Striped Bass: Ex-Vessel Value



Striped Bass Average Price by Month and Year

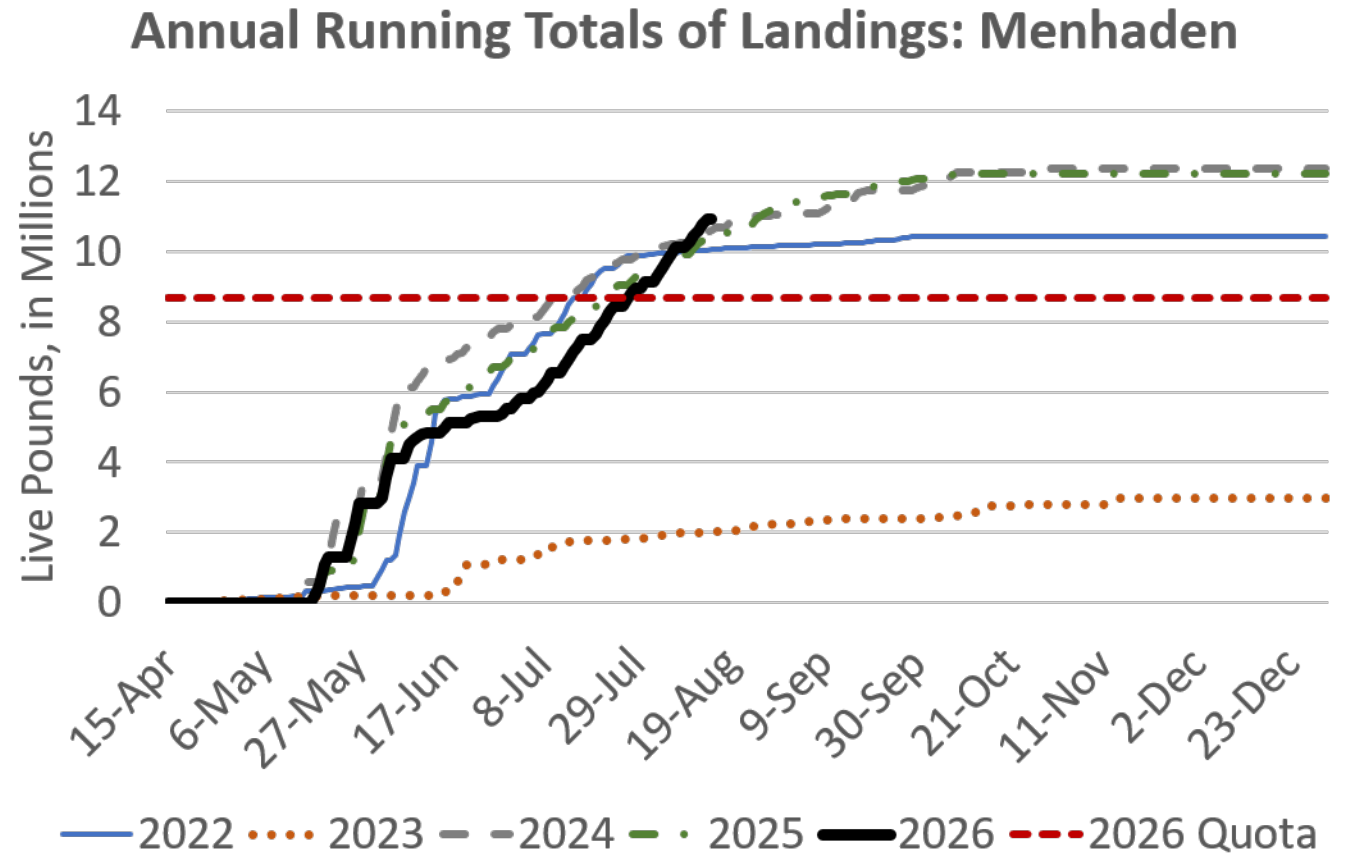
Month	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
June	\$3.66	\$3.88	\$5.15	\$3.91	\$4.04
July	\$4.17	\$3.85	\$4.08	\$4.29	\$5.41
August	\$4.24	\$3.50	\$4.45	\$4.87	\$6.00

Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026; value and prices are not adjusted for inflation.



Menhaden: Landings

- Quota decrease for 2026
- 2026 Possession Limit Changes to date
 - 120,000 lb Limit: last day 6/8, limit dropped to 25,000 lbs
 - Transitioned to EESA 7/28 after 100% of Quota was landed
- Once EESA runs out and/or transfers are not available, possession limit drops to 6,000 pounds

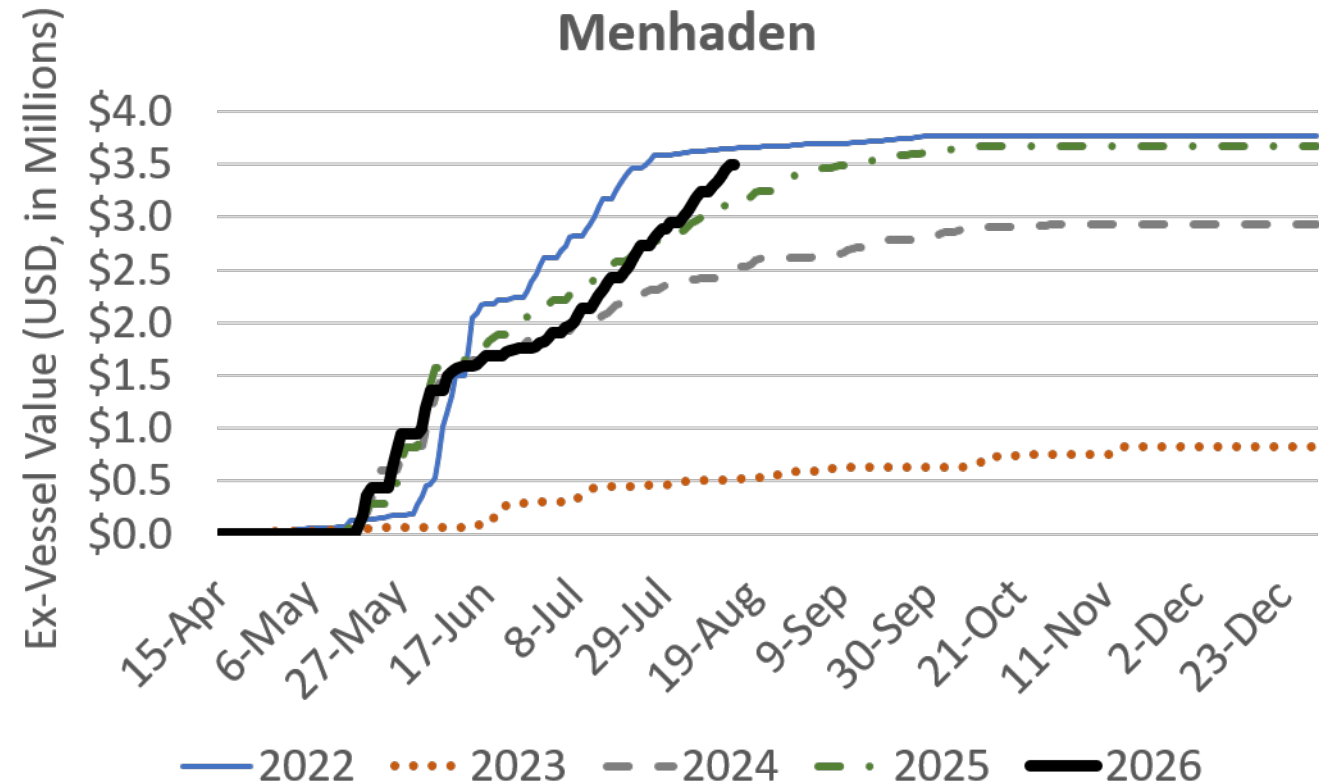


Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026



Menhaden: Ex-Vessel Value

Annual Running Totals of Ex-Vessel Value:
Menhaden



Menhaden Average Price by Month and Year.

An * indicates the value is confidential.

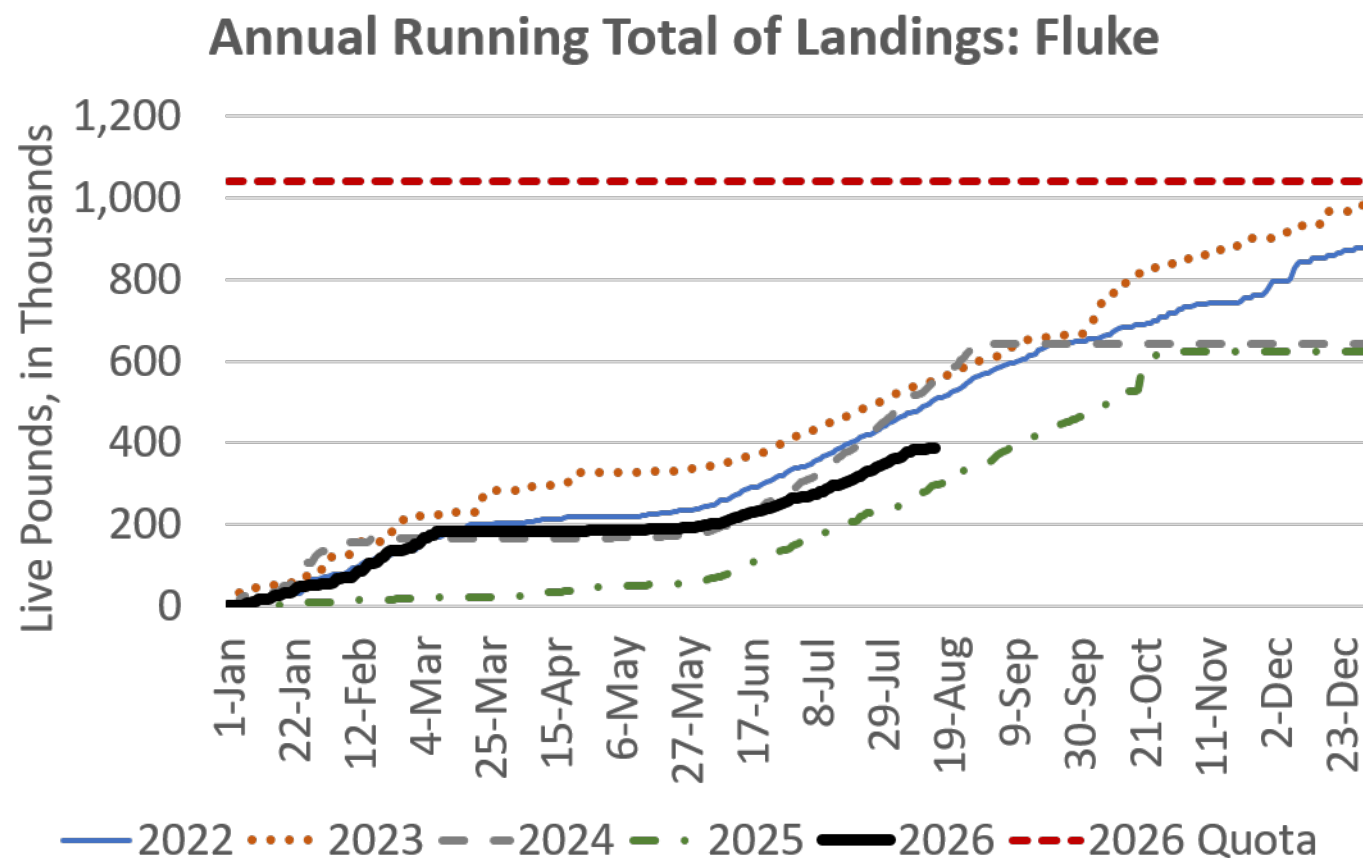
Month	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
May	*	\$0.28	\$0.24	\$0.31	\$0.33
June	\$0.37	\$0.24	\$0.24	\$0.31	\$0.33
July	\$0.34	\$0.27	\$0.23	\$0.30	\$0.31
August	\$0.36	\$0.30	\$0.25	\$0.29	\$0.31
September	\$0.30	\$0.28	\$0.24	\$0.28	n/a

Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026; value and prices are not adjusted for inflation.



Summer Flounder (Fluke): Landings

- Quota significantly decreased 2024 and 2025, increased 2026
- 2026 Period 1 landed ~18%, Period 2 opened 4/23
- As of 8/19:
 - 2026 percent landed: 38.6%
 - No projected closure date for 2026 yet
 - 75% of the quota was not taken by 8/15 so that trigger was not met and possession limits remained status quo
- Pending triggers:
 - Decrease to 200 lb if 90% taken before 9/1
 - Increase to 1,000 lb if >20% remains on 9/1
 - Increase to 5,000 lb if >10% remains on 10/1

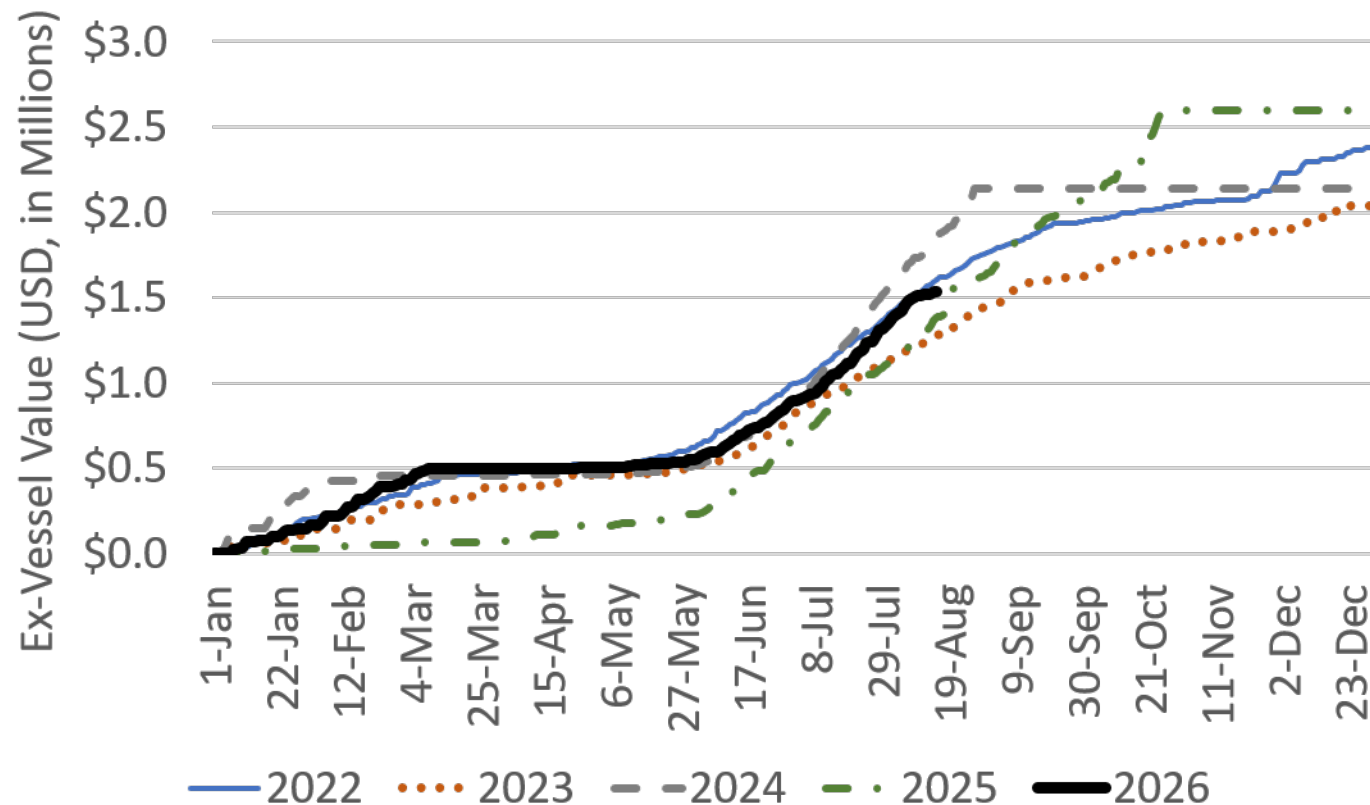


Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026



Summer Flounder (Fluke): Ex-Vessel Value

Annual Running Total of Ex-Vessel Value: Fluke



Fluke Average Price by Month and Year. Note that prices displayed here are averaged across all sizes.

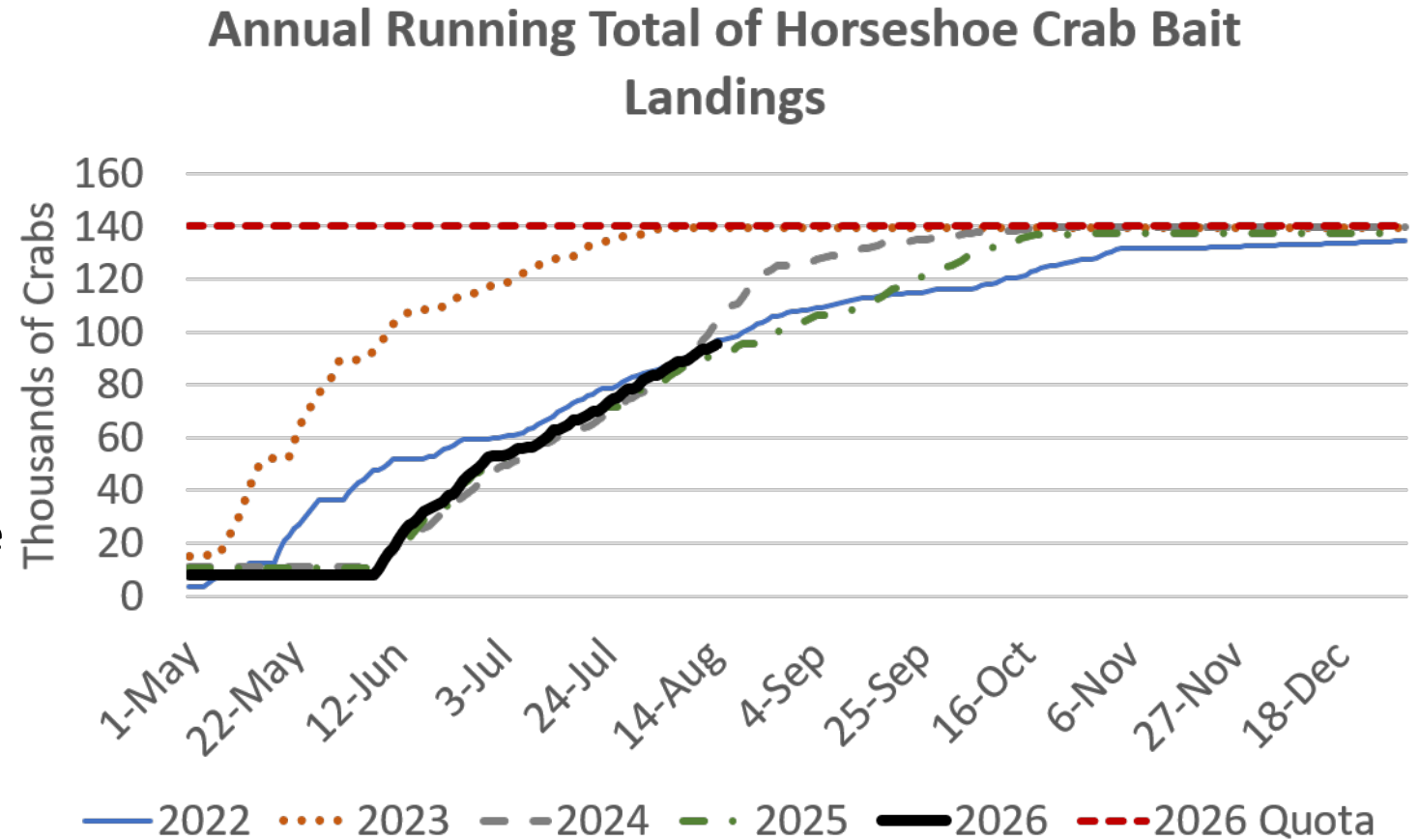
Month	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
May	\$4.91	\$3.62	\$4.45	\$4.68	\$5.26
June	\$3.81	\$4.16	\$3.30	\$5.00	\$5.25
July	\$3.69	\$3.29	\$3.99	\$4.83	\$5.85
August	\$2.96	\$3.47	\$3.18	\$5.03	\$5.97
September	\$2.30	\$2.76	n/a	\$3.86	n/a

Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026; value and prices are not adjusted for inflation.



Bait Horseshoe Crab: Landings

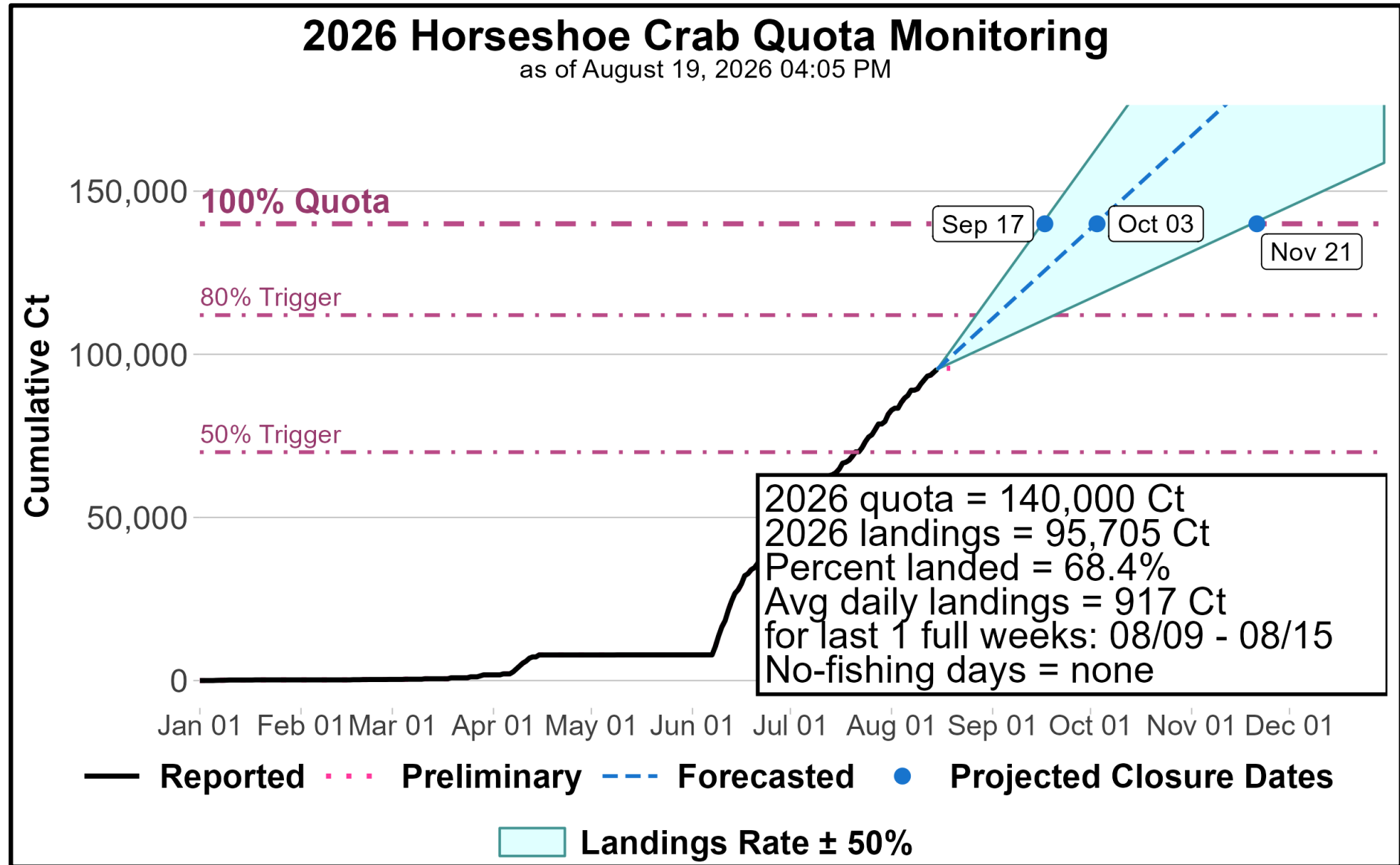
- 4/15-6/7 closure implemented in 2024
- As of 8/19
 - 2026 percent landed: 68.4%
 - Less than 50% of the quota remained on 8/1 so that trigger was not met and possession limits remained status quo
 - Projected closure date currently 10/3
 - Some late reports explain the difference in rate shown here versus last month
- Pending triggers:
 - Reduce possession limit to 200 crabs if 80% taken on or before 9/15



Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026



Bait Horseshoe Crab: 2026 Quota Monitoring



Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026

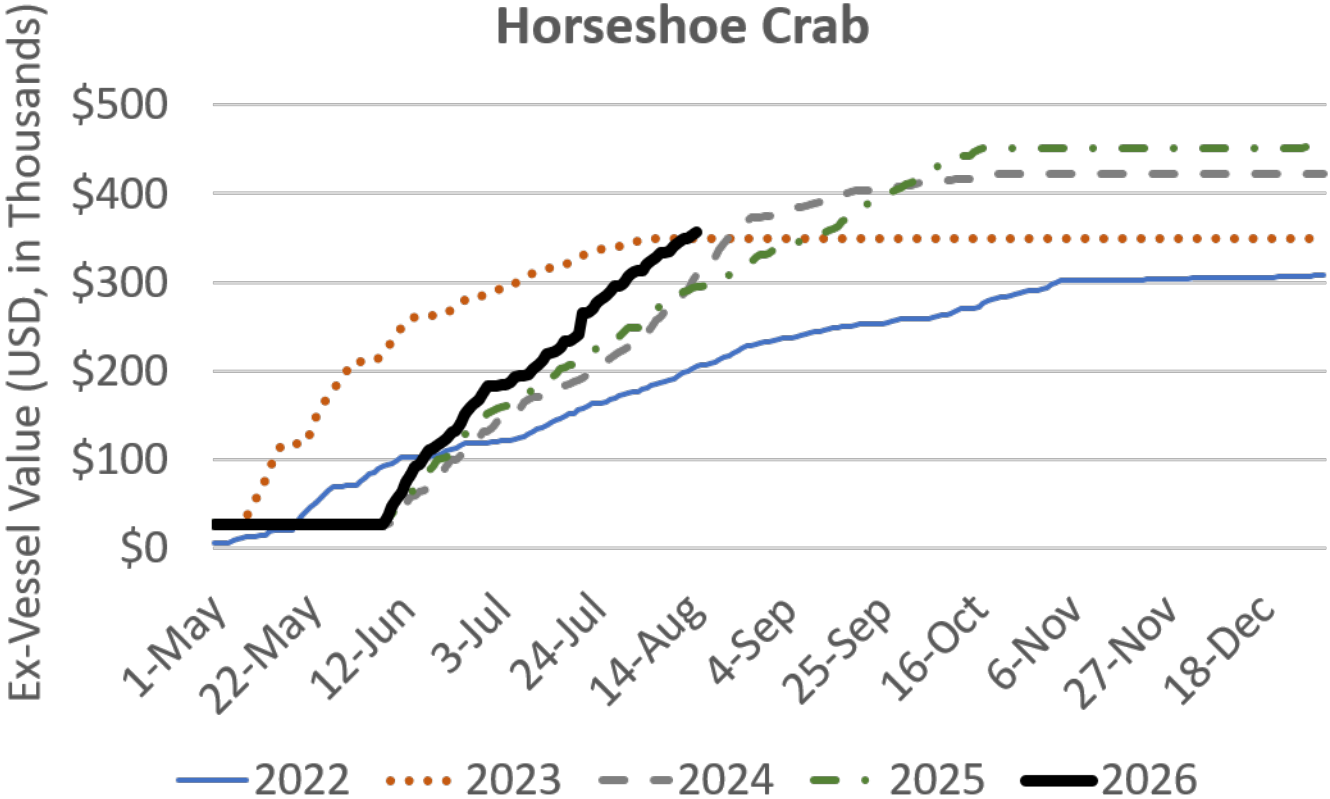
MFAC— August 26, 2026

Massachusetts Division
of Marine Fisheries



Bait Horseshoe Crab: Ex-Vessel Value

Annual Running Totals of Bait Ex-Vessel Value:
Horseshoe Crab



Bait Horseshoe Crab Average Price by Month
and Year

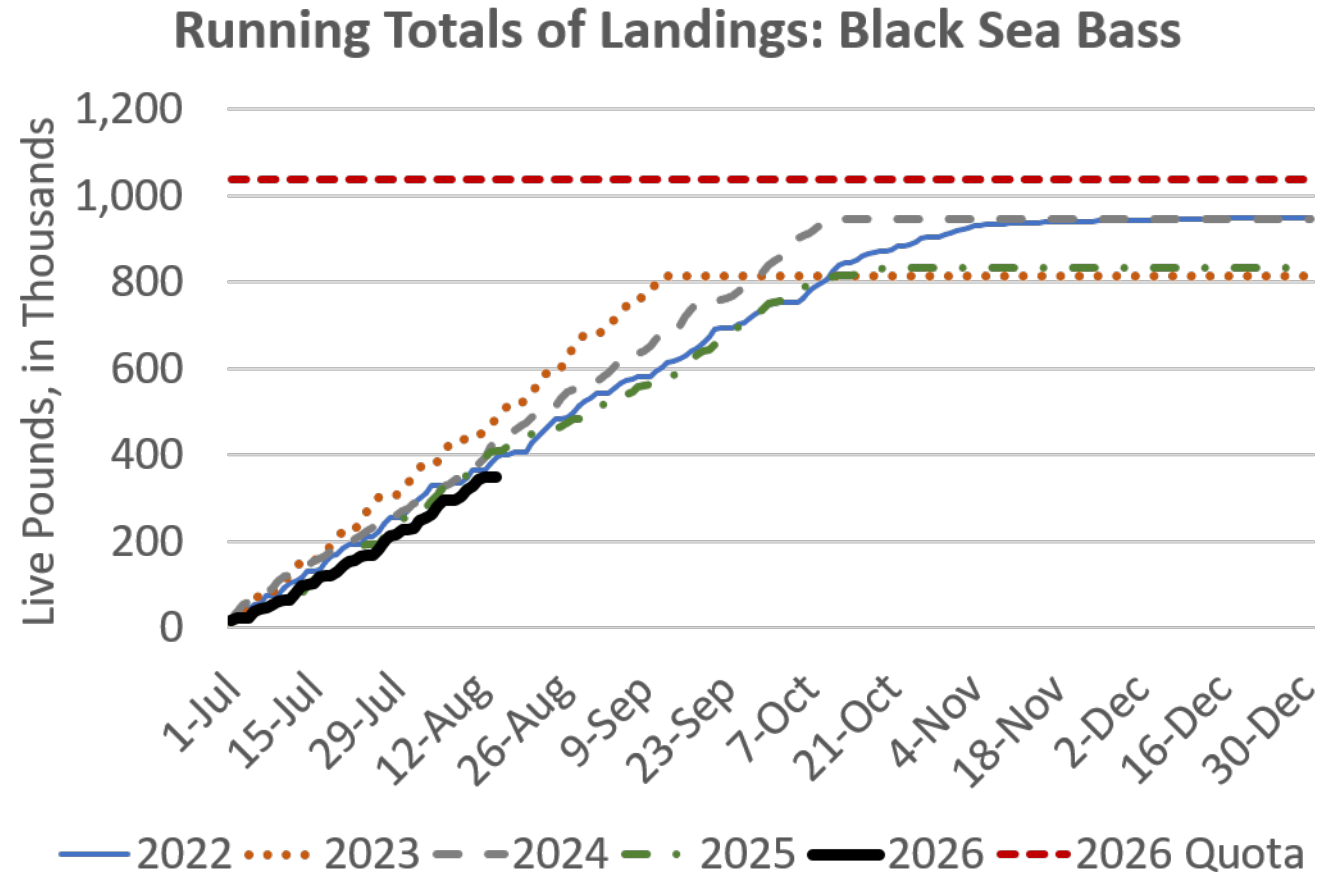
Month	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
June	\$2.12	\$2.76	\$3.13	\$3.12	\$3.30
July	\$2.28	\$2.74	\$2.97	\$3.39	\$3.26
August	\$2.48	\$2.73	\$3.05	\$3.51	\$3.52
September	\$2.86	n/a	\$3.25	\$3.47	n/a

Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026; value and prices are not adjusted for inflation.



Black Sea Bass: Landings

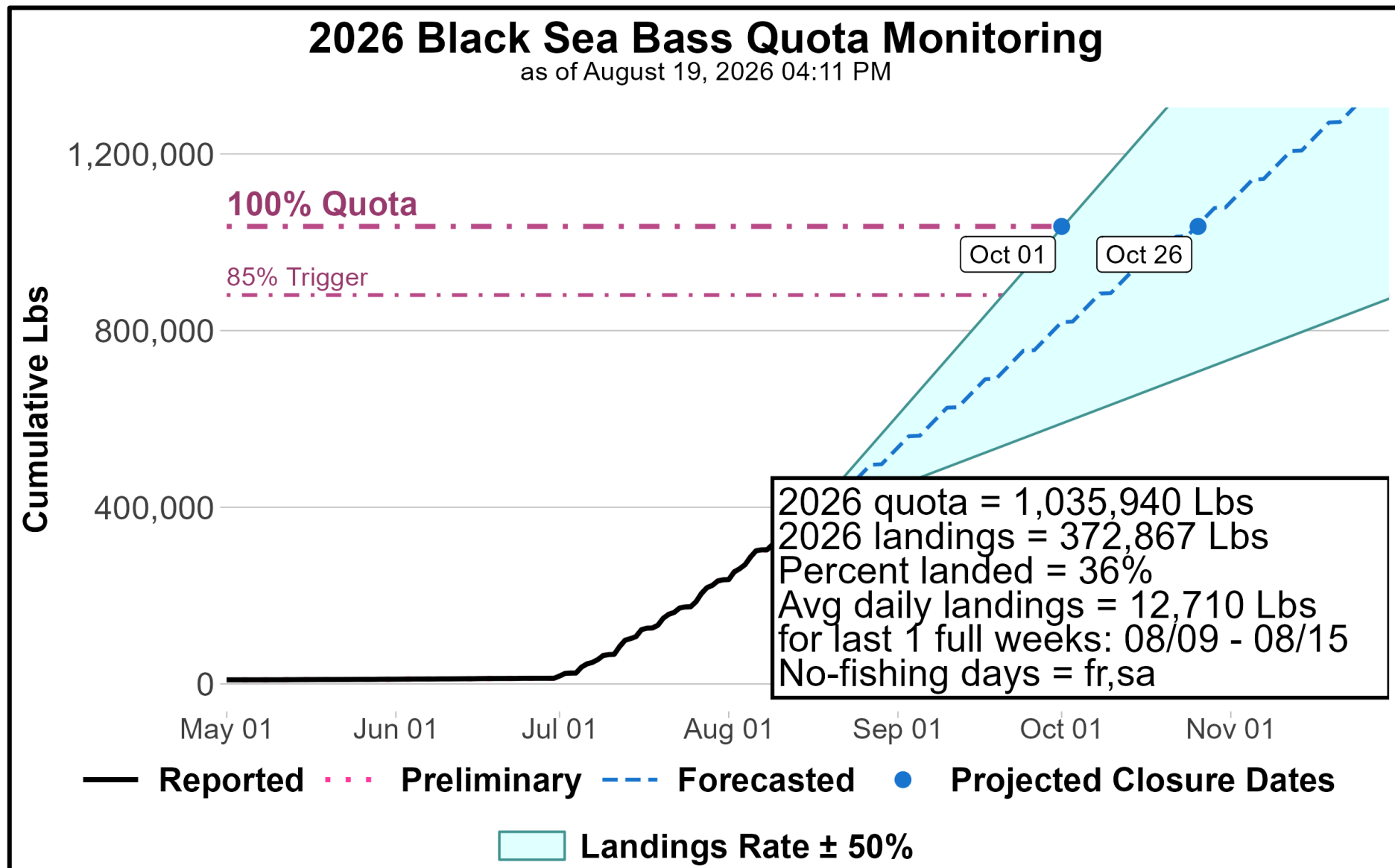
- Pot and Rod & Reel fishery opened 7/1
- Quota increased in 2022, decreased 2023, increased 2024, decreased 2025, increased 2026
- As of 8/19
 - 2026 percent landed: 36%
 - Projected closure date of 10/26
- Pending Triggers:
 - Increase possession limit if >15% remains on 9/1



Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026



Black Sea Bass: 2026 Quota Monitoring



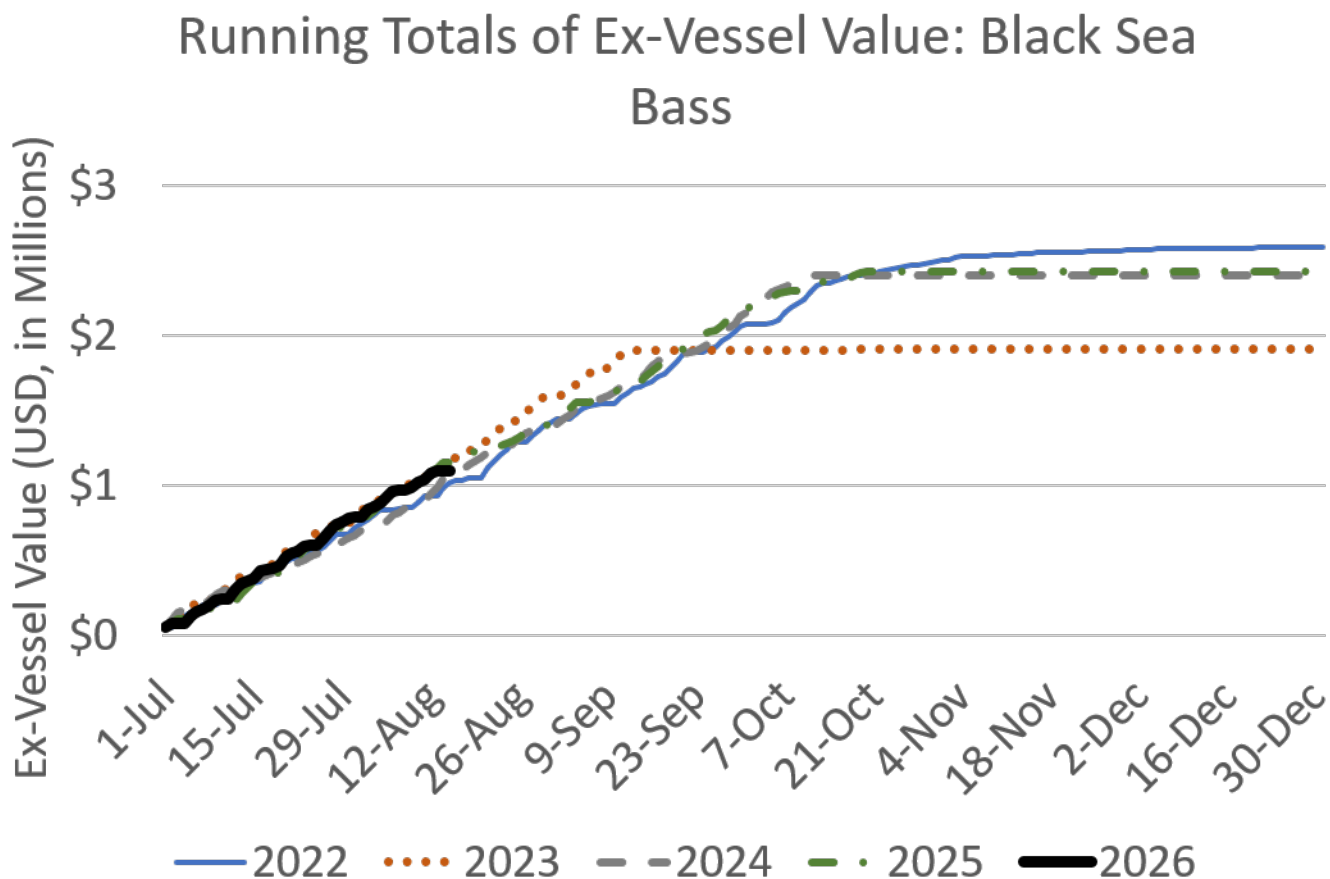
Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026

MFAC— August 26, 2026

Massachusetts Division
of Marine Fisheries



Black Sea Bass: Ex-Vessel Value



Black Sea Bass Average Price by Month and Year. Note that prices displayed here are averaged across all sizes.

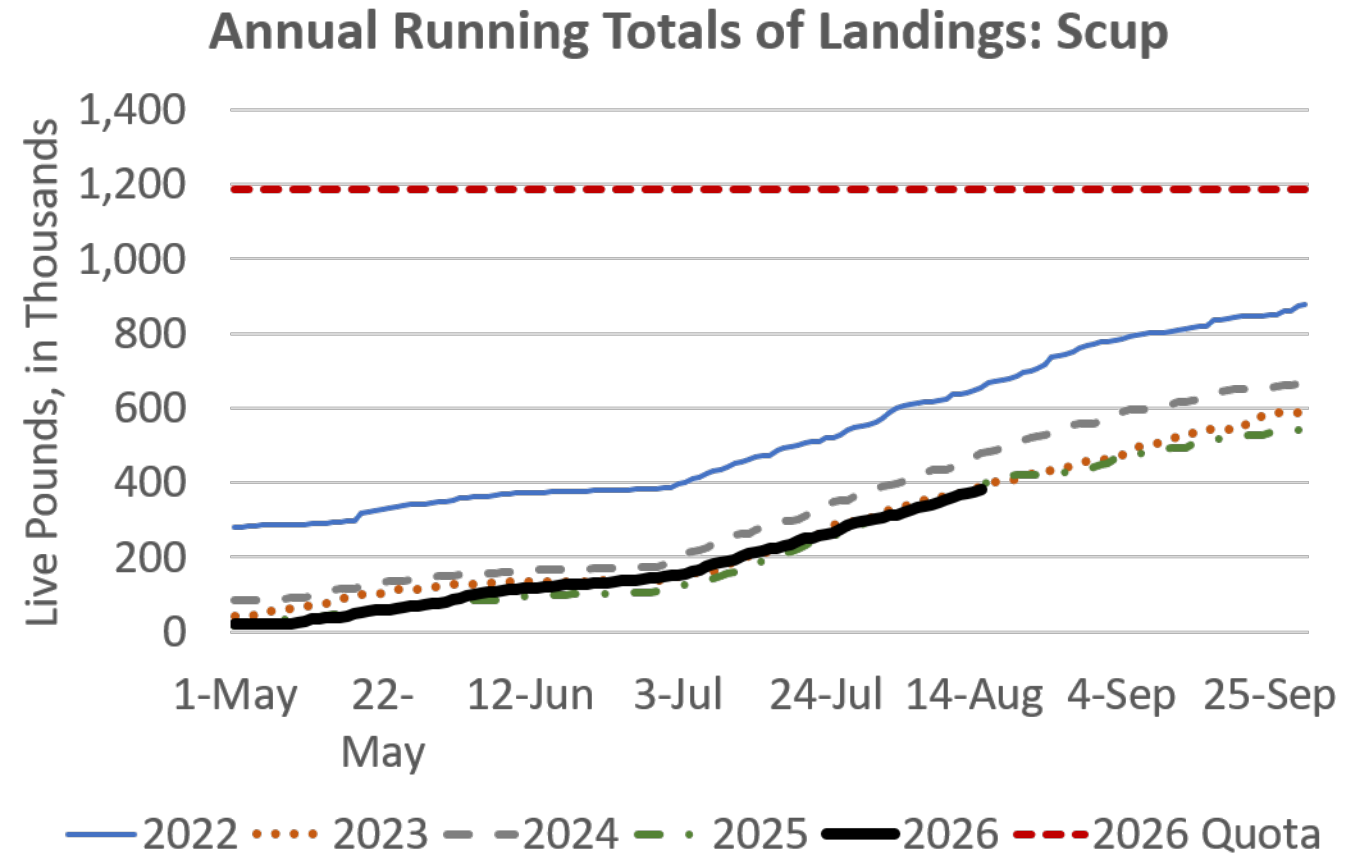
Month	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
July	\$2.57	\$2.31	\$2.40	\$3.00	\$3.72
August	\$2.74	\$2.34	\$2.55	\$2.72	\$2.47
September	\$2.98	\$2.33	\$2.65	\$2.96	n/a

Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026; value and prices are not adjusted for inflation.



Summer Scup: Landings

- As of 8/19
- 2026 percent landed: 34.2%
- No projected closure date for 2026 yet



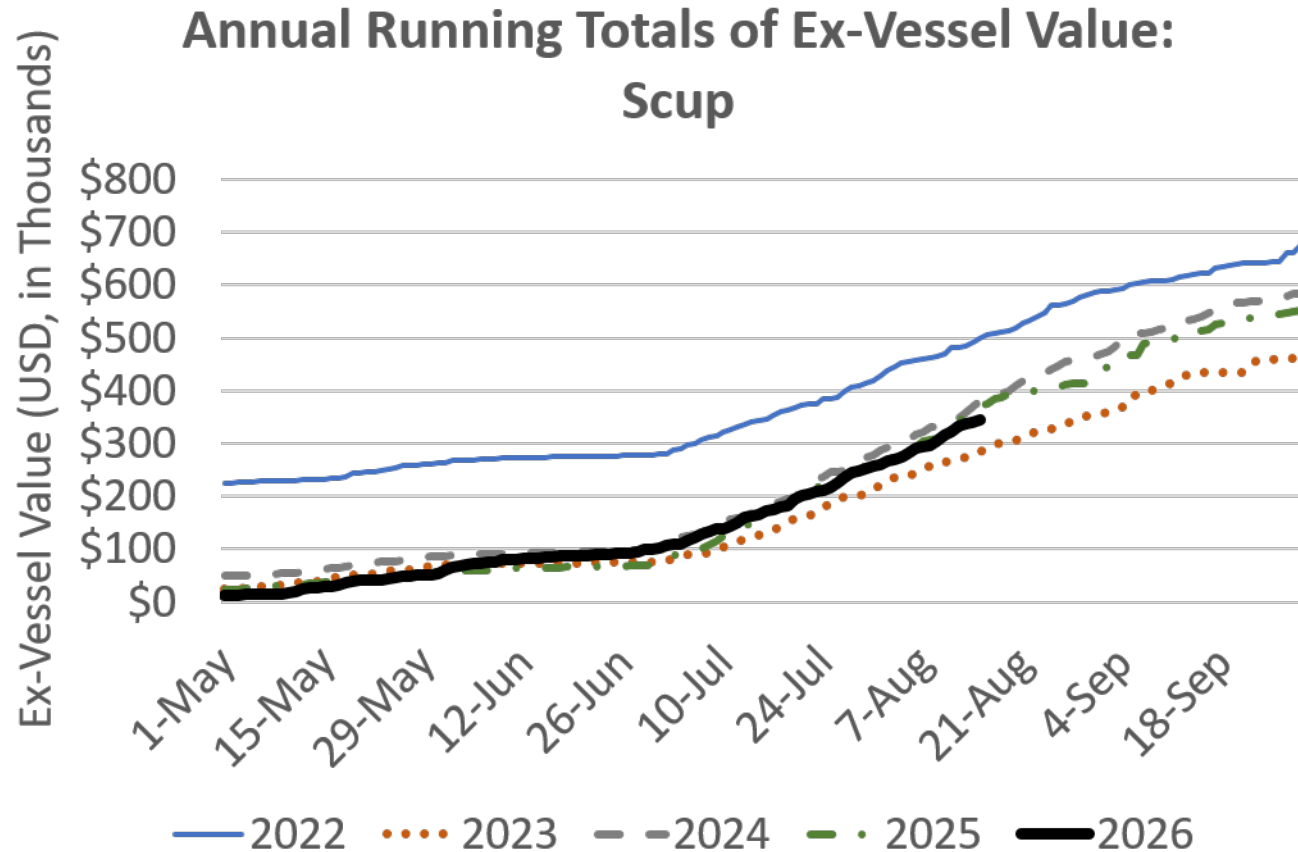
Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026

MFAC— August 26, 2026

Massachusetts Division
of Marine Fisheries



Summer Scup: Ex-Vessel Value



Summer Scup Average Price by Month and Year

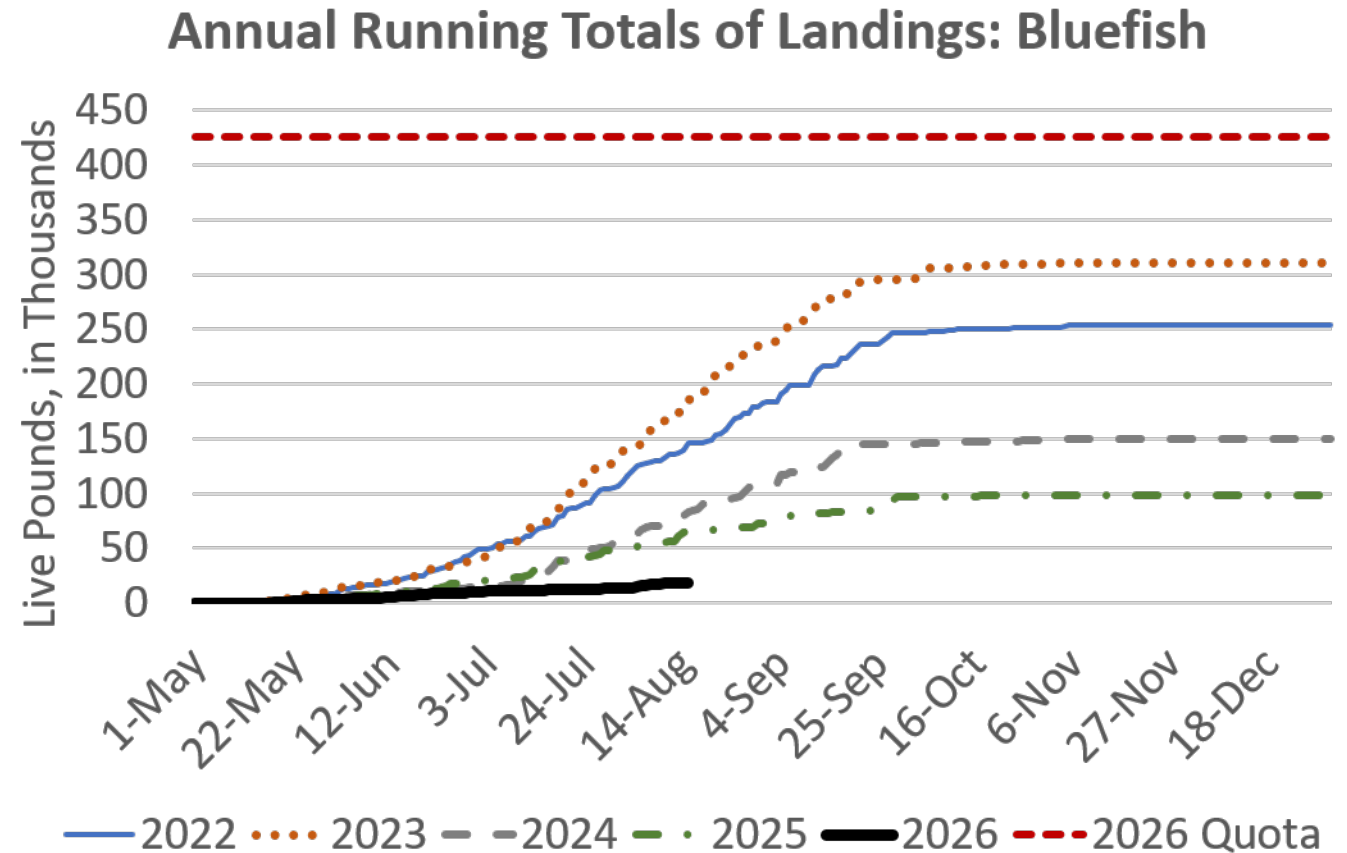
Month	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
May	\$0.56	\$0.55	\$0.53	\$0.53	\$0.56
June	\$0.47	\$0.36	\$0.54	\$0.48	\$0.65
July	\$0.78	\$0.80	\$0.87	\$1.01	\$1.07
August	\$0.79	\$0.96	\$1.05	\$1.22	\$1.18
September	\$0.88	\$0.83	\$1.15	\$1.19	n/a

Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026; value and prices are not adjusted for inflation.



Bluefish: Landings

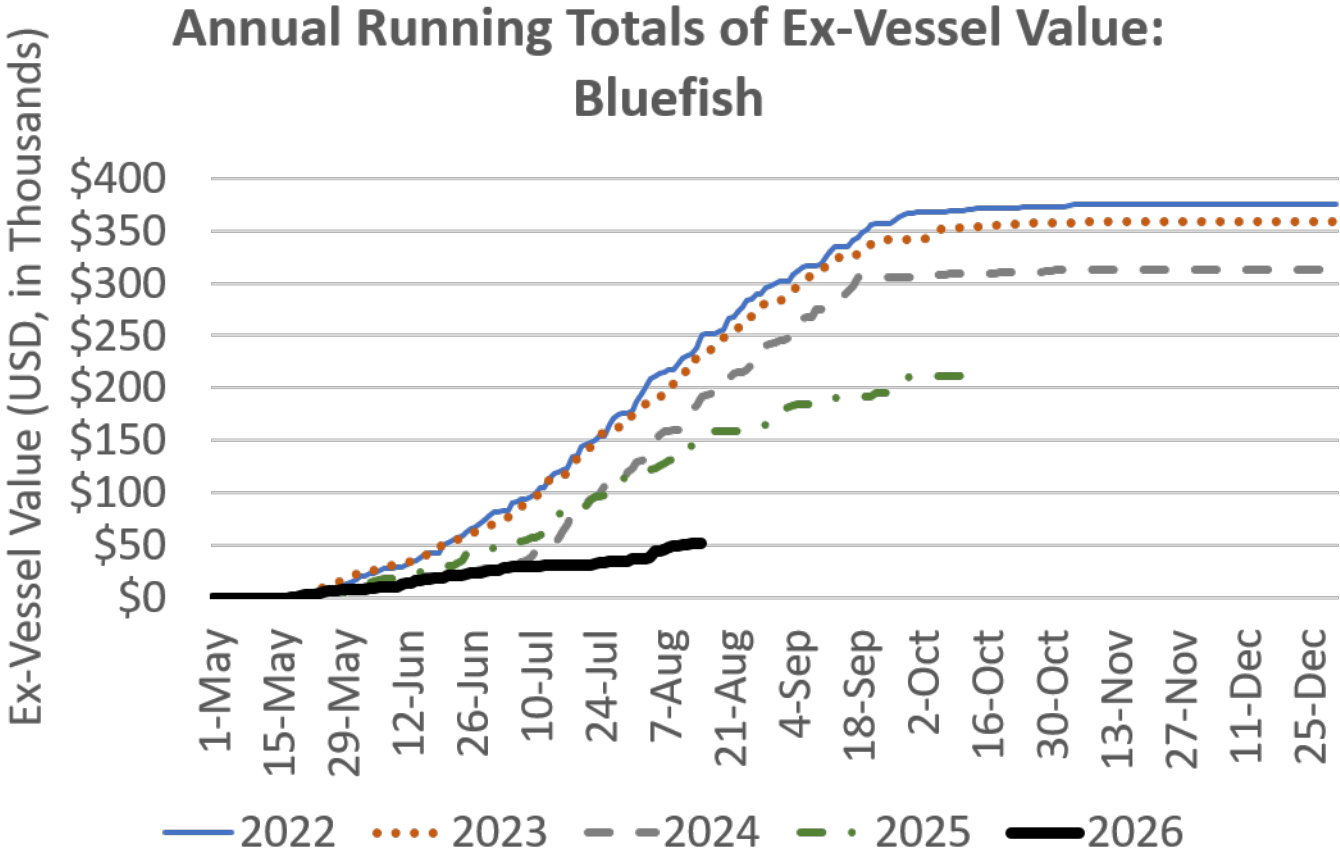
- As of 8/19
 - 2026 percent landed: 5.2%
 - No projected closure date for 2026 yet



Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026



Bluefish: Ex-Vessel Value



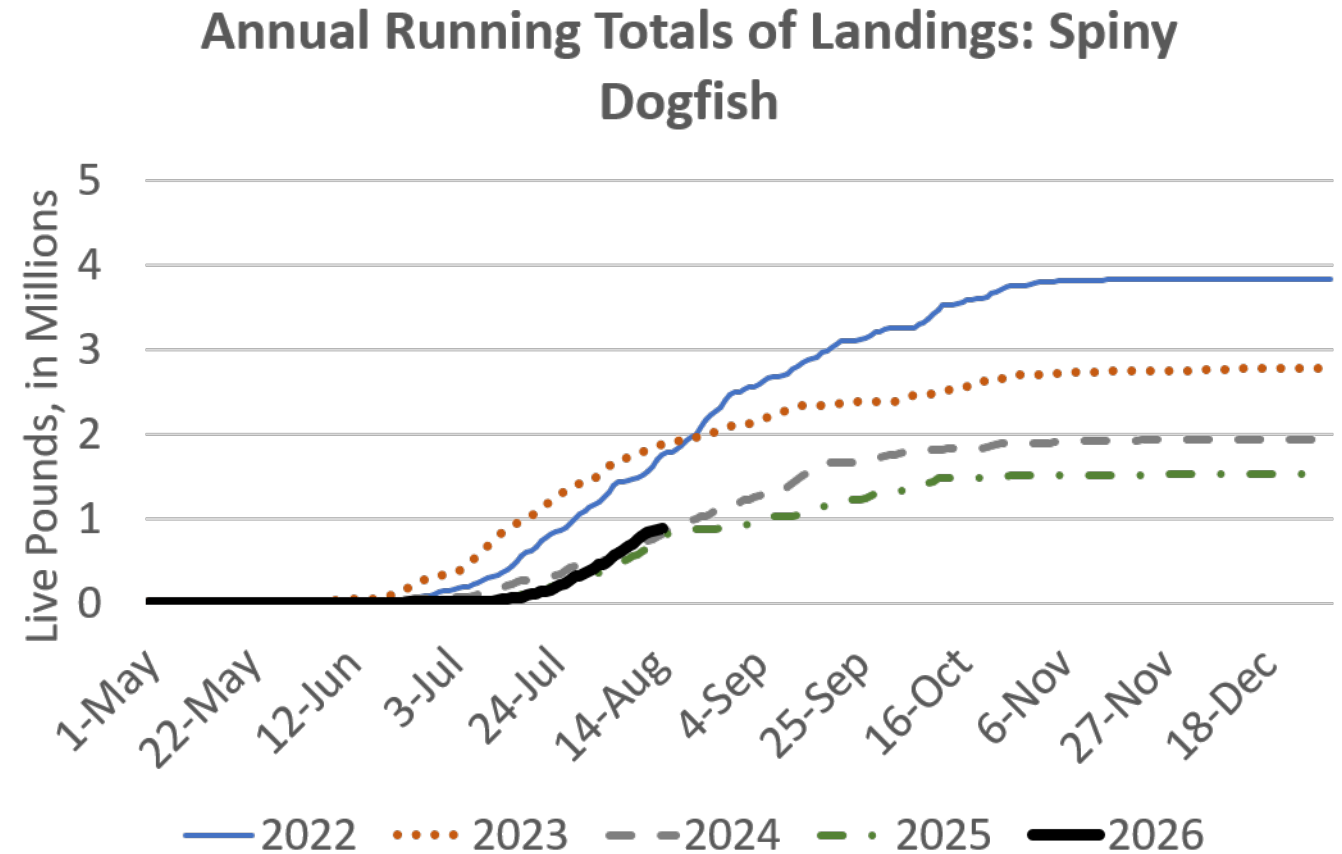
Bluefish Average Price by Month and Year					
Month	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
June	\$1.68	\$1.79	\$2.46	\$2.36	\$2.75
July	\$1.67	\$1.12	\$2.23	\$2.32	\$3.10
August	\$1.58	\$1.07	\$2.36	\$2.44	\$2.67
September	\$1.05	\$0.97	\$1.62	\$1.58	n/a

Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026; value and prices are not adjusted for inflation.



Spiny Dogfish: Landings

- Landings began to pick up in mid-July
- 9.24% of coastwide quota landed to date
- 17% of ME-CT regional quota landed to date

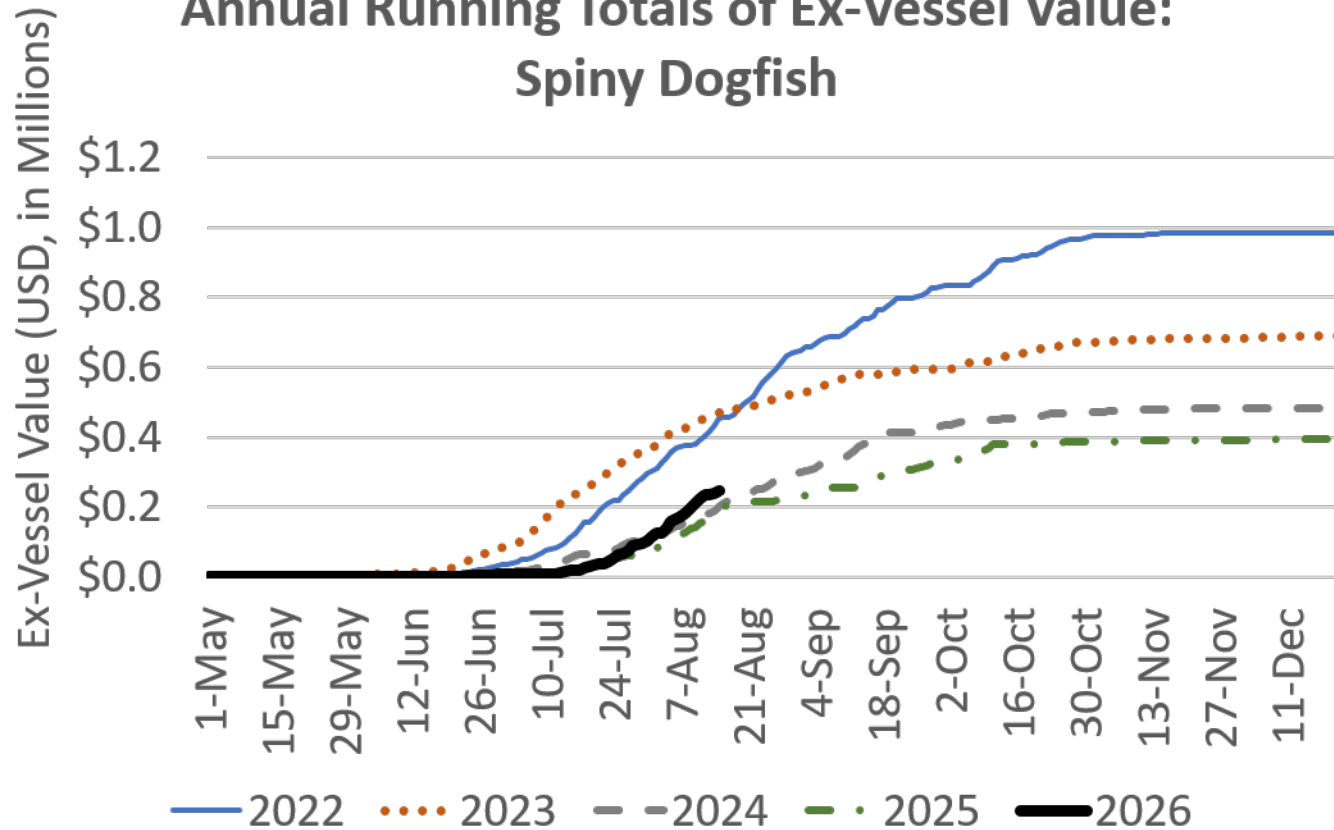


Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026



Spiny Dogfish: Ex-Vessel Value

Annual Running Totals of Ex-Vessel Value:
Spiny Dogfish



Striped Bass Average Price by Month and Year

Month	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
May	\$0.32	\$0.30	\$0.29	*	n/a
June	\$0.25	\$0.25	\$0.26	\$0.24	*
July	\$0.26	\$0.25	\$0.25	\$0.28	\$0.28
August	\$0.25	\$0.25	\$0.26	\$0.26	\$0.28
September	\$0.26	\$0.25	\$0.25	\$0.27	n/a

Data Source: SAFIS eDR as of 8/19/2026; value and prices are not adjusted for inflation.



Questions?

Email: anna.webb@mass.gov

Cell Phone: 978-559-1948





Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

ASMFC 2026 Summer Meeting

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

ASMFC 2026 Summer Meeting
August 4-6, 2026

For more information, please
contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP,
Tina Berger, Communications
or the identified individual at
703.842.0740

Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ATLANTIC HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)	3
<i>Meeting Summary</i>	3
<i>Motions</i>	3
AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026).....	3
<i>Meeting Summary</i>	3
<i>Motions</i>	5
WINTER FLOUNDER MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)	5
<i>Meeting Summary</i>	5
<i>Motions</i>	6
TAUTOG MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)	6
<i>Meeting Summary</i>	6
<i>Motions</i>	7
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (AUGUST 5, 2026)	8
<i>Meeting Summary</i>	8
<i>Motions</i>	8
No motions made.....	8
SPINY DOGFISH BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2026).....	9
<i>Meeting Summary</i>	9
<i>Motions</i>	9
COASTAL PELAGICS MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2026).....	10
<i>Press Release</i>	10

<i>Motions</i>	<i>10</i>
ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2026)	11
<i>Press Release</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Motions</i>	<i>12</i>
ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 6, 2026).....	12
<i>Meeting Summary.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Motions</i>	<i>13</i>
INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (ISFMP) POLICY BOARD (AUGUST 6, 2026)	13
<i>Meeting Summary.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Motions</i>	<i>16</i>
BUSINESS SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (AUGUST 6, 2026).....	16
<i>Meeting Summary.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Motions</i>	<i>17</i>

ATLANTIC HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Herring Management Board met to review the 2025 Research Track and 2026 Management Track stock assessments and receive an update from the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC).

The [2025 Research Track Stock Assessment](#) was conducted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) and was completed in February 2025. A peer review followed in March 2025 and the panel found all terms of reference were met and methods accepted. Notably, the Research Track transitioned the stock to the Woods Hole Assessment Model (WHAM). The [2026 Management Track Stock Assessment](#) then applied the new model to determine stock status and was completed by the NEFSC in June 2026. The following [peer review](#) found all terms of reference were met except for the projections term of reference, which was considered partially met. Similar to prior assessments, there is continued concern that the projections are overly optimistic. The Board noted the next steps to inform 2027 management will first occur through the NEFMC process with the NEFMC Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team and Scientific and Statistical Committee considering various projection sensitivity runs. The Board also noted the importance of taking actionable steps to address the research recommendations, including the integration of state and federal surveys to provide more information on age-1 Atlantic herring. The Board accepted the 2025 Research Track Stock Assessment and Peer Review for management use.

The Board received an update from the NEFMC on its upcoming Atlantic herring actions. In June 2026, the NEFMC voted to separate Atlantic herring specifications for fishing years 2027-2031 into a standalone action distinct from ongoing work to consider measures to minimize catch of river herring and shad in the Atlantic herring fishery. The NEFMC plans to take final action on 2027-2031 specifications at its September 2026 meeting. In the separate action, the NEFMC directed its Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team to continue working on time-area closures for river herring and shad, an updated specifications process for Atlantic herring, and carryover provision modifications, with final action targeted for April 2027.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to accept the 2025 Research Track Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use.

Motion made by Mr. Kane and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The American Lobster Board met to consider a number of issues: an update from the Management Objectives Process Steering Committee (SC); a conservation equivalency proposal for Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA) 5; reports from Maine and Massachusetts on recent

industry meetings with the Gulf of Maine lobster industry; and an update from NOAA Fisheries on the Request for Information (RFI) on alternative gear marking.

In May, the Board formed an SC to develop a process to define management objectives for the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) fishery. The SC includes representation from the Board, Technical Committee, Commission staff, the Commission's Committee on Economics and Social Sciences, and industry stakeholders. The SC met in June to review existing management objectives established in Amendment 3 and subsequent addenda and discuss gaps in the objectives considering the current GOM/GBK stock status, and social/economic conditions facing the fishery today. The SC will meet two more times to develop recommendations for a management objectives process to identify new management objectives across all stakeholders and identify potential management tools. A final report is expected to be delivered to the Board in November.

The Board also approved a CE proposal to modify the lobster fishery season closure in LCMA 5 (inshore and offshore Mid-Atlantic) to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster and Jonah crab harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31. The proposal was submitted by the Lobster Conservation Management Team (LCMT) for LCMA 5 with the intent of allowing LCMA 5 lobster permit holders to target black sea bass earlier in the season. The Technical Committee indicated this change is not expected to increase lobster mortality. The Board noted that the federal regulations will need to be revised to allow for the recommended changes to take effect for fishermen who hold a federal lobster permit.

Maine reported on recent meetings with stakeholders to identify potential management approaches for the Gulf of Maine. Maine held meetings earlier this year with its seven Lobster Zone Councils and Lobster Advisory Council to discuss management measures and conservation efforts. In June, the Lobster Advisory Council voted to recommend increasing the size of the required biological escape panel to 4.5 by 6 inches to allow more escapement of larger lobsters. They recommended that harvesters be given two years to come into compliance with the larger panel requirement. This proposal will be discussed at the next round of Lobster Zone Council meetings later this year and the Maine Department of Marine Resources will consider subsequent rulemaking in response to those discussions. Massachusetts reported that the state is in the process of reconstituting its LCMT membership.

The Board received an update from NOAA Fisheries on the RFI published on July 16, 2026, to gather additional information on ropeless gear and visualization technology. The RFI seeks information from fishery participants and others with specialized knowledge on the potential use of ropeless fishing gear to better inform stakeholder input and Council decision-making regarding the development of the Joint New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils' Alternative Gear Marking Framework Adjustment. Specifically, this RFI requests information specific to the program design, utility, limitations, and technical capability of ropeless fishing. Comments will be accepted until October 14, 2026 and can be submitted electronically via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <https://www.regulations.gov/document/NOAA-NMFS-2026-2080-0001>.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to approve the conservation equivalency (CE) proposal for LCMA 5 and that the Commission send a letter to NOAA Fisheries recommending the modification of the federal regulations for the LCMA 5 season closure to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to add “Jonah crab” after lobster.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Ms. Madsen. Motion approved by consent with one abstention (NOAA Fisheries).

Main Motion as Amended

Move to approve the CE proposal for LCMA 5 and that the Commission send a letter to NOAA Fisheries recommending the modification of the federal regulations for the LCMA 5 season closure to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster and Jonah crab harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31.

Motion carries by consent with one abstention (NOAA Fisheries).

WINTER FLOUNDER MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Winter Flounder Board met to receive an update from the Technical Committee (TC) on two Board requests; receive an overview of the New England Fishery Management Council’s groundfish specification process; and review a report from the TC on a Board tasking to evaluate increasing the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) recreational bag limit from 2 to 4 fish.

The TC presented an informational update on a request from the Board on the utilization of catch limits in federal waters. A comparison of cumulative catch to the allocated annual catch limits for SNE/MA and Gulf of Maine winter flounder by year from 2011-2025 showed very low utilization rates for both stocks.

The Board received an overview of the New England Fishery Management Council’s (Council) groundfish specification process to help the Board better understand the specification process, particularly how changes to state catch interacts with federal catch limits. The Council takes final action on all specification decisions, including an assumption of how much catch is assigned to state waters in future years (referred to as the state sub-component) prior to the Board’s discussion of state regulations. Commission and Council staff have discussed how to best address the disconnect between the Council’s and Board’s processes. Moving forward, the Board hopes to address the disconnect with improved communication and collaboration between the two groups. During a Council specifications setting year, Commission staff will keep the Board informed of all Council meetings. This will allow the Board to communicate to the Council if there is a need for changes to state measures, and therefore adjustment to the state sub-component prior to final action.

Commission staff will also inform the TC of Groundfish Plan Development Team meetings, particularly when the winter flounder state sub-components are discussed.

The TC presented a report addressing a Board tasking to assess the potential for increasing the SNE/MA recreational bag limit from 2 to 4 fish. The TC found the available SNE/MA winter flounder MRIP data have very high percent standard errors due to low intercepts throughout the time series, but particularly in the past 26 years. The TC also expressed concern that a higher bag limit would increase fishing effort. In turn, this increase could lead to localized depletion of winter flounder when they are concentrated in inshore state water spawning grounds, and would be expected to increase overall mortality on the stock. Although the SNE/MA winter flounder stock was considered rebuilt based on the 2022 management track assessment, this improved status was due to a change to how the stock status reference points were calculated, and does not reflect any positive change in stock status. SNE/MA spawning stock biomass continues to be estimated at time series lows. The Board agreed with the TC's recommendation to not increase the SNE/MA bag limit at this time.

For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org.

Motions

No motions made.

TAUTOG MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Tautog Management Board met to consider approval of Draft Addendum I for public comment and review updates to the Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tool based on Board feedback.

In response to the 2025 stock assessment update, which found overfishing is occurring in the New Jersey-New York Bight (NJ-NYB) and Delaware-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) regions, the Board initiated Draft Addendum I to consider options for harvest reductions in those regions that would provide a 50% probability of achieving the fishing mortality (F) target by 2030. Additionally, the Draft Addendum would present options to allow states to implement a second tag in the commercial harvest tagging program to provide more flexibility for harvesters in the live market. According to the Technical Committee projections, the NJ-NYB region would need a 40% reduction to have a 50% probability of achieving the F target in 2030, but in the DMV region, maintaining status quo removals (i.e., removals equal to the 2022-2024 average) would result in a 61% probability of being at or below the F target in 2030, meaning no reduction would be needed. For New York and New Jersey, the Draft Addendum provides options that contain a combination of modifications to the possession limits, season closures, and minimum size limits that would achieve the 40% reduction. In the DMV, options consider precautionary changes to reduce harvest or improve consistency between the state regulations in the region.

After reviewing the Draft Addendum, the Board discussed the potential impact on the necessary reductions with updated data, since harvest in New York and New Jersey in 2025 was lower than projected using 2022-2024 average removals. The Board considered delaying approving the Draft Addendum for public comment to include additional years of data while still implementing measures

before the start of the 2028 fishing year. Ultimately, the Board decided to delay the Draft Addendum to receive updated projections with the final 2025 data.

Additionally, as part of the potential modifications to New York's commercial fishery, the document contains options to change the possession limit in Long Island Sound, in addition to the NJ-NYB. This delay would provide additional time for the PDT to draft an option for Connecticut to implement a complementary possession limit to maintain consistency within the Long Island Sound region.

The Board received an update on the use of the Draft Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tool for tautog management and discussed its general use for management with Commission FMPs. The Board provided guidance for the Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tool Work Group to consider the disconnect between the socioeconomic scores from the Board and CESS, particularly in the interpretation of long-term versus short-term impacts.

For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at jboyle@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to add an option to section 3.1 LIS and NJ-NY Bight Proposed Commercial Management Measures of Draft Addendum I to allow Connecticut-permitted commercial vessels' possession limit to increase to 25 fish to align with New York permitted commercial vessels in the Long Island Sound.

Motion made by Mr. Hyatt and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Main Motion

Move that further action on Tautog Addendum I is postponed until projections to determine the reduction required to meet a 50% probability of achieving the F target in 2030 are updated using the most recent three-year average removals from 2024-2026 (in the current MRIP currency) after final 2026 MRIP estimates are released. An option to allow the Board to take management action via Board action following the results of the Benchmark Assessment should be developed by the PDT. Board action can only be used if the upcoming Benchmark Assessment shows that Fishing Mortality needs to be reduced or that it can be liberalized by 10% or greater to have a 50% probability of achieving the F-target by 2030.

Motion made by Mr. Hornstein and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion divided.

Motion to Divide

Motion to divide the question.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Motion #1

Move that further action on Tautog Addendum I is postponed until projections to determine the reduction required to meet a 50% probability of achieving the F target in 2030 are updated using the most recent three-year average removals from 2024-2026 (in the current MRIP currency) after final 2026 MRIP estimates are released.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to replace “2024-2026” to “2023-2025” and strike “after final 2026 MRIP estimates are released.”

Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Mr. Glenn. Motion passes by unanimous consent

Amended Motion #1

Move that further action on Tautog Addendum I is postponed until projections to determine the reduction required to meet a 50% probability of achieving the F target in 2030 are updated using the most recent three-year average removals from 2023-2025 (in the current MRIP currency).

Motion passes (8 in favor, 1 opposed).

Motion #2

An option to allow the Board to take management action via Board action following the results of the Benchmark Assessment should be developed by the PDT. Board action can only be used if the upcoming Benchmark Assessment shows that Fishing Mortality needs to be reduced or that it can be liberalized by 10% or greater to have a 50% probability of achieving the F-target by 2030.

Motion fails (9 opposed).

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (AUGUST 5, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Executive Committee met to receive updates on legislation, CARES Act and future annual meeting locations.

- Staff provided an update on the current state of FY27 government funding, and efforts to approve a continuing resolution to extend the current FY26 budget into December 2026. He also provided a brief update on several other fishery bills focused on establishing eDNA research programs, red snapper fishery closures, and extending the North Atlantic right whale regulation pause.
- Staff provided an update on the CARES cooperative agreement. The Commission continues to try to collect funds from those who received funds deemed ineligible. The current deadline for the Commission to pay remaining funds is December 4, 2026.
- Lastly, staff provided an update on future Annual Meeting locations. November 8-12, 2026, Rhode Island will host the annual meeting, at the Viking Hotel in Newport. In the following years the host states are: 2027 South Carolina; 2028 Massachusetts; 2029 Pennsylvania, 2030 Georgia and 2031 Connecticut.

For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance & Administration, at lleach@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

No motions made.

SPINY DOGFISH BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Spiny Dogfish Management Board met to consider a conservation equivalency (CE) proposal from the northern region states, with the exception of Maine, to implement a weekly trip limit for the 2026 fall fishery, and to review a report on the commercial fishery from the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS).

The Board reviewed the CE proposal that would allow the northern region states except Maine (NH-CT) to implement a weekly trip limit of 37,500 pounds for their-federally permitted commercial harvesters, instead of the current 7,500 pound daily limit, from September 1 to December 31, 2026. Implementation is contingent on receiving an Exempted Fishing Permit from NOAA Fisheries, currently under review, to allow federally-permitted harvesters to participate. The proposal is in response to consistent underutilization of the northern region quota in recent years and is designed to provide more economically viable trips to harvesters at a time when the stock moves farther offshore. The proposal was reviewed by the Law Enforcement Committee, Technical Committee, Plan Review Team, and Advisory Panel (AP). Only minor concerns were discussed by the committees regarding quota monitoring and the risk of discards if the processor receives an influx of supply that exceeds its capacity. The states and AP members noted that a communication system between the processor and harvesters is being developed to alleviate any capacity concerns. Additionally, the states have the ability to review daily vessel reports in all states within the region, thereby, allowing for monitoring of the weekly quota between landings in multiple states. Following the recommendation from the committees, the Board approved the proposal.

CESS provided a report on the available social and economic data of the commercial spiny dogfish fishery to help assess the impacts associated with low quotas and the potential adjustments to trip limits. The report noted the consistent underutilization of the quota is likely due to market limitations and the low ex-vessel price rather than resource availability. Additionally, it highlighted the lower quotas in recent years combined with the closure of the southern processor has left the fishery largely dependent on one northern processor, and industry advisors are concerned by the viability of the fishery. No further action or tasks were provided by the Board at this time.

For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at jboyle@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to approve conservation equivalency for a Northern Region weekly aggregate trip limit of 37,500 pounds from September 1-December 31, 2026.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Ms. Zobel. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

COASTAL PELAGICS MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2026)

Press Release

ASMFC Coastal Pelagics Board Sets Atlantic Cobia Total Harvest Quota and Recreational Measures for 2027 Fishing Season

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Coastal Pelagics Management Board approved a total harvest quota of 80,112 fish and status quo recreational management measures for the Atlantic migratory group of cobia for the 2027 fishing season. This total quota results in a coastwide recreational quota of 76,908 fish and commercial quota of 73,116 pounds for 2027.

The total quota level of 80,112 fish per year has been the same since 2020 and is based on the results of the [2020 benchmark stock assessment](#). The Board has maintained this quota given the absence of updated stock projections and considering the recent underutilization of recreational quota.

A new Atlantic cobia stock assessment is currently underway and scheduled to be completed in mid-2027. The Board intends to use the new assessment to inform total harvest quotas and management measures for 2028 and beyond.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, FMP Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org.

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PR26-12

Meeting Summary

In addition to setting fishery specifications (see above press release), the Coastal Pelagics Management Board also received a progress update on the 2027 Atlantic Cobia Stock Assessment; considered the Atlantic Cobia Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review and state compliance for the 2025 fishing year; received an update from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) on Spanish mackerel; and elected a Vice Chair.

The Board received an update on the 2027 Atlantic Cobia Stock Assessment. The Data Workshops were conducted in March-April 2026 and the Methods Workshop is scheduled for late September 2026. The Assessment Workshop is anticipated to occur in December 2026 and the peer review is being scheduled for May 2027 through the SouthEast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR). Following the peer review, the Board is scheduled to receive the assessment and peer review reports at the 2027 Summer Meeting with the intent to inform 2028 management measures for Atlantic cobia.

The Board approved Atlantic cobia state compliance reports and the FMP Review for the 2025. All states’ regulations were found to be consistent with the FMP, and the Board approved all Atlantic cobia *de minimis* requests from Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and Georgia.

The Board received an update from the SAFMC on a new Spanish mackerel action. In June 2026, the SAFMC initiated an amendment to address a fishing year change for Spanish mackerel in response to

discussion about harvest balance between the Northern and Southern Zones. The current fishing year runs from March 1-end of February which results in the Northern Zone fishing first. This makes it difficult to determine how much quota from the Southern Zone might be available to transfer to the Northern Zone since the Southern Zone has not fished their season yet. The action will consider a fishing year that allows the Southern Zone to fish first to address this issue. Regarding other Spanish mackerel management issues, the SAFMC has been considering how to respond to recommendations from the 2024 Mackerel Port Meetings as well as updating catch levels. The SAFMC is waiting until the revised MRIP time series is available and until the next Spanish mackerel stock assessment which is planned for early 2027.

Finally, the Board elected Jason McNamee of Rhode Island as Vice Chair. For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to set the total harvest quota for Atlantic cobia for 2027 fishing year at the status quo level of 80,112 fish. This results in a recreational quota of 76,908 fish and a commercial quota of 73,116 lbs. Recreational management measures will remain status quo in 2027.

Motion made by Mr. Haymans and seconded by Mr. Dyar. Motion approved by consent with one abstention (FL).

Move to approve the Atlantic Cobia FMP Review for the 2025 fishing year, state compliance reports, and de minimis requests from Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and Georgia.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion passes by consent with one abstention (FL).

Move to elect Jason McNamee as Vice Chair.

Motion made by Ms. Kennedy and seconded by Mr. Simpson. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2026)

Press Release

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Approves Draft Addendum II for Public Comment *Draft Addendum Considers Changes to Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap*

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved Draft Addendum II to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers options to reduce the Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap (Bay Cap) by up to 50% and distribute the cap more evenly throughout the fishing season. The options aim to alleviate a concentration of effort that may be affecting other fisheries within the Bay and other potential ecological impacts.

The Draft Addendum was initiated in response to concerns regarding declining pound net harvest and catch per unit effort in the Bay in recent years, coinciding with an increase in the concentration of reduction harvest in the summer months, and the possible downstream effects on menhaden predators.

The Draft Addendum also includes options that link the Bay Cap to the coastwide total allowable catch to maintain a more fixed proportion between the two, as well as options to distribute the Bay Cap into three quota periods to prevent a concentration of reduction harvest in the spring and summer of the fishing season.

A press release will follow with details on the availability of the document for public comment, the public hearing schedule, and how to submit written comments. This information will also be available on the [Atlantic Menhaden Draft Addendum II Action Tracker webpage](#). A public comment form will also be available as another option to submit input on the Draft Addendum's specific options.

The Board will meet to review submitted comments and consider final action on the addendum in November 2026 at the Commission's Annual Meeting in Newport, Rhode Island. For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at jboyle@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR26-13

Motions

Move to approve the Draft Addendum II on Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap for public comment.

Motion made by Mr. LaFrance and seconded by Dr. Colden. Motion passes (16 in favor, 2 opposed).

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 6, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to consider a draft letter to NOAA Fisheries regarding offshore striped bass aquaculture; consider the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review and state compliance for the 2025 fishing year; receive an update on the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment timeline; and consider a nomination to the Advisory Panel.

The Board reviewed a draft letter to NOAA Fisheries regarding offshore striped bass aquaculture. The draft letter specifically responds to NOAA Fisheries' draft technical memorandum *Charting A Course for Striped Bass: Science and Regulatory Innovation for Offshore Aquaculture*. NOAA Fisheries presented the memorandum to the Board in February 2026 and requested feedback from the Commission. Several Commissioners provided written comments to Commission staff which were compiled into the draft letter for Board consideration. Commissioner comments outlined areas where the memorandum lacks sufficient detail and outlined concerns regarding potential offshore striped bass aquaculture. The draft letter addresses enforcement concerns, economic concerns, user conflicts, project siting, aquaculture industry questions, ecological concerns, protected species concerns, biological risks, and policy/regulatory questions. The Board made the following modifications to the draft letter: 1) add content regarding the importance of a marine spatial planning process and include user conflicts and project siting under this section; 2) add a note about the high cost of VMS particularly for small vessels related to enforcement; and 3) add the term "striped bass" throughout the letter to make it clear the letter refers specifically to offshore striped bass aquaculture, and not to offshore aquaculture in general. With these modifications, the Board

moved the draft letter forward to the ISFMP Policy Board for its consideration. The Board also confirmed the conclusion of the draft letter reflects their position that given the risks and unresolved issues, there is not support for moving forward with consideration of offshore striped bass aquaculture at this time.

The Board approved state compliance reports and the FMP Review for the 2025 fishing year. All states' regulations were found to be consistent with the FMP.

The Board received an update on the timeline for completing the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment. The 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment is underway with the Assessment Workshop scheduled for late August 2026. The NRCC peer review was originally scheduled for March 2027, however, the peer review is being moved to late May/early June 2027 to allow sufficient time for the assessment to incorporate the revised MRIP time series. The Board is scheduled to receive the assessment and peer review reports at the 2027 Summer Meeting.

Finally, the Board approved a nomination to the Advisory Panel for Mike Waine, with the American Sportfishing Association, as a North Carolina representative.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to recommend the ISFMP Policy Board approve and send the striped bass offshore aquaculture comment letter to NOAA Fisheries as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Grist and seconded by Dr. McNamee. Motion passes by consent with 2 abstentions (NOAA and USFWS).

Move to approve the Atlantic Striped Bass FMP Review for the 2025 fishing year and state compliance reports.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

Move to approve Mike Waine of North Carolina to the Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion carries by unanimous consent.

INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (ISFMP) POLICY BOARD (AUGUST 6, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The ISFMP Policy Board met to receive reports from the Executive Committee (see earlier Executive Committee summary), the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS), and the Assessment Science Committee (ASC). The Board discussed the *De Minimis* Guidelines, and the Sector Separation Amendment timeline and stakeholder workshop process. It reviewed the work of the Fisheries Compensation Fund and the Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (RAPID). Lastly, it considered two letters to NOAA Fisheries.

The Commission includes *de minimis* provisions in interstate fishery management plans (FMP)s to reduce the management burden for states whose measures would have a negligible effect on the conservation of a species. In 2022, the Policy Board approved a policy that outlines *de minimis* standards for FMPs but also allows for a species board to deviate from the standards to address unique characteristics of a fishery. At the May 2026 meeting, the Sciaenids Board reviewed potential changes to sciaenid species *de minimis* standards to address concerns that states were dropping in and out of *de minimis* regularly. The Plan Review Team (PRT) provided the Board with several recommendations to address the concerns. It was requested that the Policy Board review the recommendations of the Sciaendis PRT (e.g. tiered thresholds) to determine if the *De Minimis* Policy should be revised for any of the changes. After review, the Policy Board determined all of the potential changes could be done under the provision in the guidelines that allows for Board to deviate from the policy standards and no additional changes needed to be made to the policy at this time.

The Policy Board and the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) have been working on Sector Separation Amendment that considers options to allow for sector-specific management in the summer flounder, scup, black seas bass and bluefish recreational fisheries. A Stakeholder Workshop to provide feedback on the draft Amendment is scheduled for September 2026. This workshop will provide feedback to the Board and Council on development of management objectives and options for the Sector Separation Amendment. The Policy Board discussed the appropriate timing to review feedback from the workshop and revise the draft Amendment for consideration by the Board and Council for public comment. The Board decided the best timing to review the workshop feedback would be during the Commission's Annual Meeting and consider a final range of options/alternatives at the Commission's Winter Meeting. Given the joint nature of the document and the importance of working collaboratively with the Council, It's the Board's intent for the Council to take part in all these discussions.

CESS) recently met to discuss several ongoing updates and tasks. The meeting also covered an update on the Atlantic striped bass and bluefish bioeconomic recreation demand model. Developed by contractors Scott Steinbeck and Lou Carr-Harris, using focus-group surveys, choice experiments, and bioeconomic simulations, the model links angler behavior to stock dynamics and fishery regulations. While the framework will be functional for bluefish management as the contractors wrap up their contract this month, further refinement will be required before it is ready for use for Atlantic striped bass management. Beyond this project, CESS is adjusting socioeconomic metrics in the draft risk and uncertainty tool, ready to assist with future management efforts for other Commission-managed species, and working to create an Atlantic striped bass economic data infographic.

The Policy Board reviewed ASC options to adjust the Commission's stock assessment schedule, including a request to move up the next tautog assessment to 2028 to allow for the incorporation of the new MRIP values and new surveys in the Delaware-Maryland-Virginia region. The Board agreed to delay the weakfish assessment, previously scheduled for 2028, and move up tautog to 2028. The modernized version of the Commission's Guide to Fisheries Science and Stock Assessments was presented. It replaces the fisheries science guide developed over 15 years ago with a new, interactive digital version tailored to reflect current scientific methods and improve accessibility. Staff expects to release a downloadable, printable PDF version within the next few months for offline use. You can

find the interactive version of the guide [here](#). Lastly, staff updated the Board on two on-going assessments. The Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Peer Review was conducted the July 27-30, 2026 and will be presented to the Sciaenid Management Board in November. A data workshop for the Atlantic Sturgeon Stock Assessment will be held next week.

A representative of the [Fisheries Compensation Program](#) for Atlantic Coast Offshore Wind, provided an overview of the program and the work they will be doing in the near future. The Fisheries Compensation Fund is a regional program established to compensate affected commercial and recreational for-hire fishing businesses, through a fair and equitable claims process, for potential impacts caused by offshore wind development along the Atlantic Seaboard. It is focused on *future* compensation programs (it does *not* affect programs already in place) and how money is distributed *through* a regional fund, *not* on how money comes into such a fund. It has designated a Regional Fund Administrator (RFA), which is the third-party, independent administrator tasked with designing and developing a fair and equitable claims process to compensate fishing businesses for potential costs and losses incurred by offshore wind development. In addition, a Design Oversight Committee and For-Hire Committee have been established to provide advice and guidance from the states, fishing industry, and offshore wind developers as the RFA develops the processes, policies, and procedures. For more information about the program and upcoming meetings check out its [website](#).

In April 2026, NOAA Fisheries introduced the Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (RAPID) as a core component of its updated National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy. RAPID is designed to modernize the way saltwater recreational fishing data is collected and managed by transforming the existing Marine Recreational Information Program. Staff presented RAPID goals including extend shared-governance partnerships with state, council, commission, and federal partners; set direction for co-design of future recreational fishing data enterprise; and maintain current data collection design until recommendations are implemented. An Information page on RAPID has been created and can be found [here](#). A communications plan is set to be distributed later this month. Notable achievements for RAPID include Waves 5-6, 2026 APAIS allocation increased by 10%+ for Atlantic (ME-GA) with more to be added through all of 2027; and the Steering Committee soliciting regional workshop planning team participation from partners to begin in August 2026. Looking forward an inventory of existing recreational fishing data collection programs will be conducted and workshops will be held from October 2026 – March 2027.

Finally, the Board reviewed approved two letters to be sent to NOAA Fisheries. The first letter is to recommend changes in lobster measures in the EEZ for LCMA 5's lobster closed season. It will allow traps to be set and black sea bass to be harvested but still not allow for the harvest of lobster and Jonah crab (see American Lobster Board meeting summary). The second letter provides comments on the NOAA Fisheries' draft technical memorandum *Charting A Course for Striped Bass: Science and Regulatory Innovation for Offshore Aquaculture*. The letter addresses enforcement concerns, economic concerns, user conflicts, project siting, aquaculture industry questions, ecological concerns, protected species concerns, biological risks, and policy/regulatory questions. Given the risks and unresolved issues identified in the letter, the Commission does not support NOAA moving forward with consideration of offshore striped bass aquaculture at this time.

Motions

On behalf of the American Lobster Management Board, move to send a letter to NOAA Fisheries recommending the modification of the federal regulations for the LCMA 5 season closure to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster and Jonah crab harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31.

Motion made by Ms. Zobel. Motion passes by consent with 2 abstentions (NOAA, FWS).

On behalf of the Atlantic Striped Bass Board, move to recommend the ISFMP Policy Board approve and send the striped bass offshore aquaculture comment letter to NOAA Fisheries as modified today.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve. Motion passes (15 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to approve the Commission Stock Assessment Schedule, as modified today (Option 1, delay weakfish and assess tautog in 2028).

Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Mr. Gary. Motion passes (12 in favor, 1 opposed, 5 abstentions).

BUSINESS SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (AUGUST 6, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Commission considered two revisions to the Commission Rules and Regulations during its Business Session, as recommended by the Executive Committee. The first revision changes the criteria to guide states in declaring an interest on species management boards. Specifically, “a state shall be deemed to have an interest in a fishery if it meets either of the following criteria: (a) The species is found in the waters under the state’s jurisdiction in at least two of the past five years, as documented with state or federal fishery-dependent or -independent data or other credible evidence brought forth by the state (such as data from spawning migrations, peer-reviewed publications, eDNA, or other); (b) The state’s fishery participants are recorded as having taken at least 1% of the total Atlantic coast commercial or recreational landings of the species in at least three of the past five years, as documented by state or federal statistics.”

This revision was made in recognition of the changing distribution of many species managed by the Commission, which in turn has resulted in (and is anticipated to result in) additional interest by states to alter their participation on species management boards. The revised criteria are meant to add specificity to the eligibility criteria, clarify valid data sources, correct for redundant and outdated language, and better reflect the species and fisheries under Commission management.

The second revision changes the name of the Legislative and Governor Appointees Sections to Legislative and Governor Appointees Committees to better reflect the committee structure with the Commission.

Both revisions were approved. A revised Rules and Regulations will be posted to the website next week at <https://asmfc.org/resources/management-guiding-document/asmfc-compact-rules-and-regulations/>. For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Executive Director, at rbeal@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to approve the changes as presented today to the Commission Rules and Regulations

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Grist. Motion passes by unanimous consent.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Marine Fisheries
(617) 626-1520 | mass.gov/MarineFisheries



Maura T. Healey
Governor

Kimberly Driscoll
Lt. Governor

Rebecca L. Tepper
Secretary

Thomas K. O'Shea
Commissioner

Daniel J. McKiernan
Director

July 28, 2026

Chris Moore, Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street, Suite 201
Dover, DE 19901

Robert Beal, Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Joseph Cimino, Chair
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street, Suite 201
Dover, DE 19901

John Maniscalco, Summer Flounder Board Chair
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Council and Commission Leadership for Summer Flounder Management,

At the Mid-Atlantic Council's April 2026 meeting, the GARFO Regional Administrator brought to the Council's attention industry interest from New England fishers to develop a summer flounder open access incidental catch permit (or other regulatory mechanism) to allow a nominal retention of summer flounder bycatch by harvesters not holding a federal summer flounder moratorium permit. Having heard the same interest directly from Massachusetts permit holders, I am writing on behalf of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries to request that the Council consider adding an investigation into the issue and possible action to its 2027 Implementation Plan, and if a corresponding, coordinated action from the states is needed, that the Commission consider a complementary line item for its 2027 Action Plan.

The issue of increased frequency of summer flounder bycatch resulting in permit-related regulatory discarding in the Northeast was raised to me relative to the skate and monkfish fisheries in particular. That these (and possibly other) New England fisheries are experiencing summer flounder bycatch with more regularity is not surprising given the summer flounder assessment's conclusion of a northward and eastward shifting stock since the time that access to the fishery was limited over 30 years ago. It is my understanding that the amount per trip of summer flounder discards in these non-targeted fisheries is relatively low and consequently insufficient for the vessel owners to rationalize purchasing an (expensive) federal limited entry summer flounder moratorium permit. An alternative open access permit that would allow a small retention limit (e.g., 100 pounds) would serve to minimize unnecessary waste of the resource when caught compliant with all other relevant summer flounder gear, size, and season restrictions without the same cost barrier. DMF would encourage the Council to consider mechanisms that would ensure the bycatch remains non-directed, is properly accounted for in quota management, and attentive to state permitting systems.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Daniel J. McKiernan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Daniel" and last name "McKiernan" clearly legible.

Daniel J. McKiernan, Director

CC: Michael Pentony (NMFS)
Toni Kerns, Chelsea Tuohy (ASMFC)
Hannah Hart (MAFMC)
Nichola Meserve (MA DMF)
MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission: Shelley Edmundson, Chair

Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission
August 26, 2026

Interstate Fisheries Management Updates

- ASMFC Summer 2026 Meeting: August 4-6
- MAFMC/ASMFC August 11, 2026 Meeting

Massachusetts Division
of Marine Fisheries



ASMFC Summer Meeting – Key Actions

- **Spiny Dogfish:** Northern Region weekly limit proposal approved
 - Evaluate if greater flexibility will provide for more economically viable fishing trips and enhanced quota utilization; inform future setting of the trip limit
 - Contingent on approval of federal Exempted Fishing Permit application
 - Exempt certain state/federal spiny dogfish harvesters from 7,500-lb trip limit
 - Authorize a 37,500-lb weekly aggregate limit (using no more than 4 trips)
 - Sept 1 – Dec 31, 2026 or until 80% of Northern Region quota taken
 - Capped at 50 vessels at most from NH, MA, RI and CT



ASMFC Summer Meeting – Key Actions

- **Atlantic Menhaden:** Draft Addendum II approved for Public Comment
 - Proposes additional precautionary measures for Chesapeake Bay management
 - Revisions to Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery cap:
 - (1) Reduce it in response to indications of reduced menhaden availability in Bay;
 - (2) Link future changes to change in the TAC (same % increase/decrease); and
 - (3) Establish within-season quota periods to prevent temporal concentration
 - Public hearings in mid Sept-early Oct (Sept 29 New England states webinar)
 - Final action in November, along with
 - (1) Setting Total Allowable Catch for 2027-2029, and
 - (2) Revisiting Allocations (discussion; motion necessary to initiate any action)



ASMFC Summer Meeting – Key Actions

- **Tautog:** Postponed approval of Draft Addendum I for Public Comment (NJ-NYB & DelMarVa response to assessment results) until projections can be updated with realized 2025 catch and revised projected 2026 catch; moved up next stock assessment from 2029 to 2028.
- **Striped Bass:** Approved a letter to NOAA Office of Aquaculture stating lack of support for development of offshore striped bass aquaculture.
- **Winter Flounder:** Commitment to better NEFMC-ASMFC coordination to better enable potential state waters management changes.



ASMFC Summer Meeting – Important Updates

- **Lobster**

- Comment Opportunity – NOAA RFI on Potential Use of Ropeless Gear – Oct 14 deadline.
- Progress update on GOM MSE (steering committee for process to define objectives).

- **Striped Bass**

- FMP Review presented: 25% reduction in total removals (#) in 2025.
- 2027 Stock Assessment Timeline: presented to Board in August 2027.
- Steering committee to commence on Board tasks relative to informing future management.

- **Recreational Sector Separation Amendment (Fluke/Scup/BSB/Bluefish)**

- Stakeholder Workshop – Sept 23-24. Gathering input to help define range of alternatives (i.e., mode management approaches & for-hire permitting and reporting requirements).
- Added additional Board meeting to receive workshop report & provide direction to FMAT/PDT (Nov) before approving options for public comment (Feb).



MAFMC/ASMFC Joint Meeting – Key Actions

- **Scup:** Winter I Revisions
 - Allow GARFO to use projected landings to assess 80% trigger to reduce trip limit & to use discretion in implementing the reduced trip limit (Council)
 - Allow Winter I (or Summer or Winter II) overages to be waived if annual quota not exceeded (Council/ASMFC)
- **Summer Flounder/Scup/Black Sea Bass/Bluefish:** 2027 Specifications
 - No changes to commercial quotas, recreational harvest limits, and commercial measures previously set as two-year specs in 2025.
 - Voted down changes to scup Winter I trigger percent & trip limit



Questions/Discussion



Striped Bass 2025 Fishery Removals

- 2025 total removals decrease 25% (# fish) from 2024
 - Com harvest: -11% (#), -4% (lb)
 - Rec harvest: -17% (#), -27% (lb)
 - Rec releases: -39% (#)
- 2025 removals proportions
 - 18% com (18% harvest, <1% dead disc)
 - 82% rec (47% harv, 35% dead disc)
- Rec estimates expected to change with revised MRIP time series and PRM estimate.

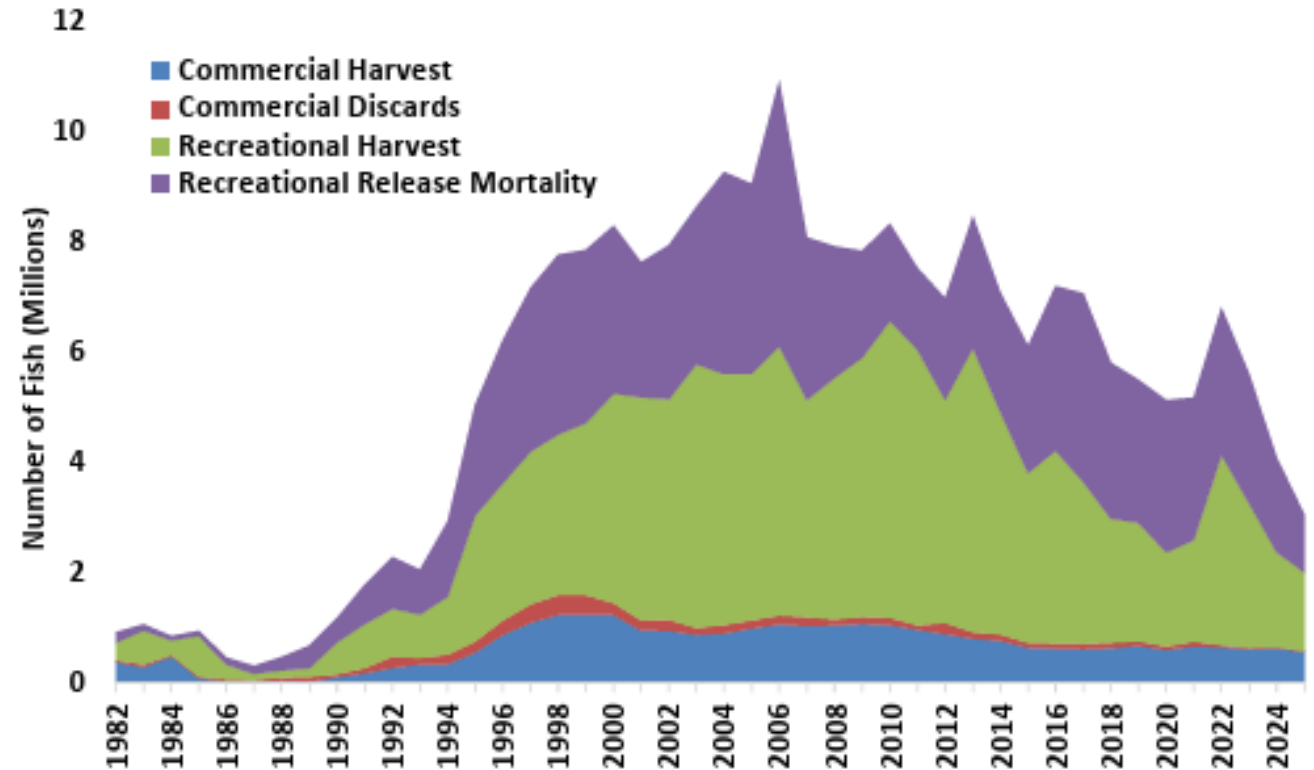
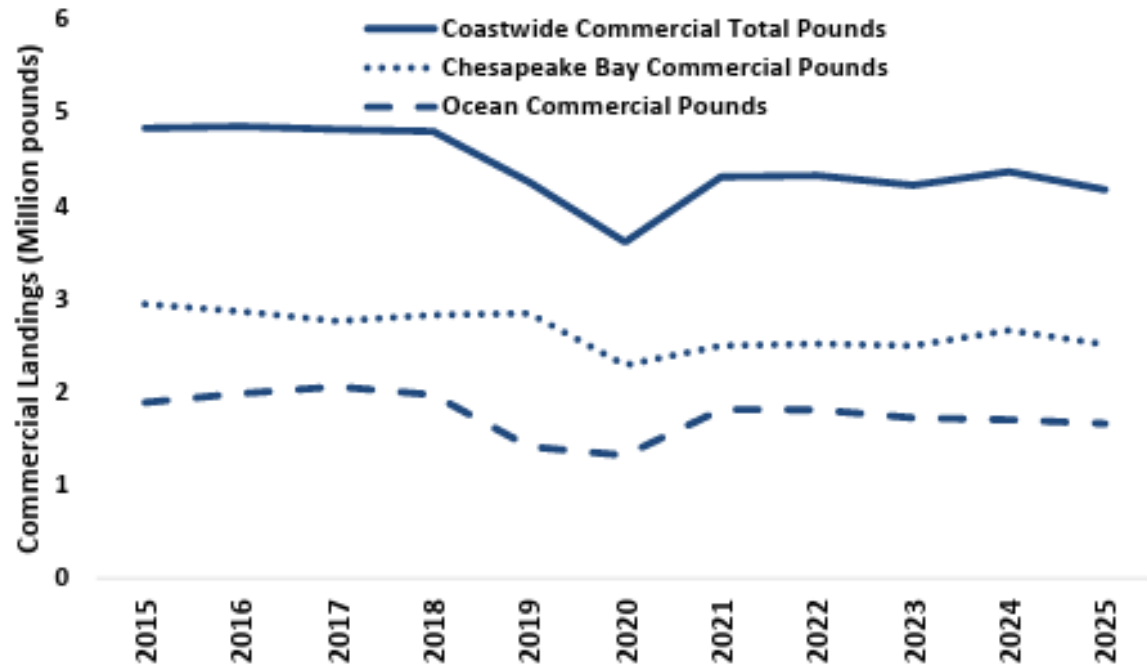


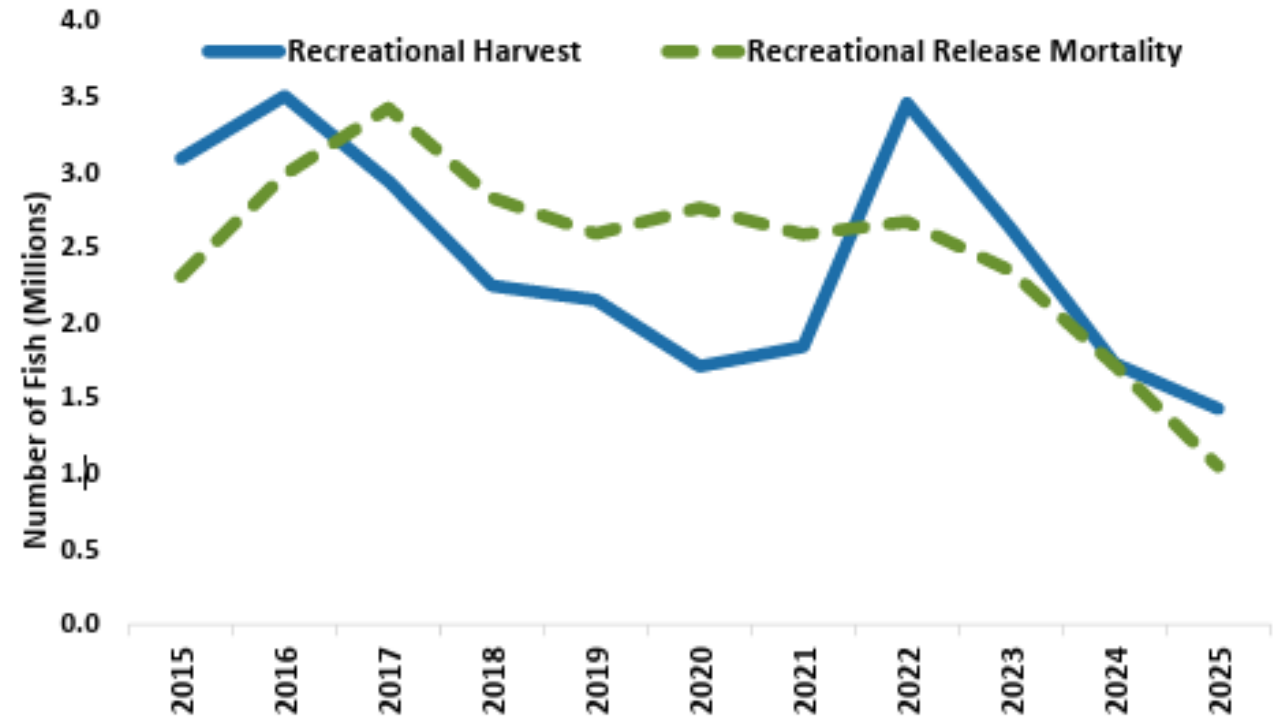
Figure 5. Total Atlantic striped bass removals by sector in numbers of fish, 1982-2025. Note: Harvest is from State Compliance Reports/MRIP, discards/release mortality is from ASMFC. Estimates exclude inshore harvest from A-R.

[ASMFC 2025 FMP Review]

2025 total com harvest: 4.2 mlb or ~543,000 fish



2025 total rec harvest: 11.2 mlb or 1.4 million fish



TC had expected an increase in 2025 recreational harvest as above-average 2018 year-class entered the ocean rec slot.

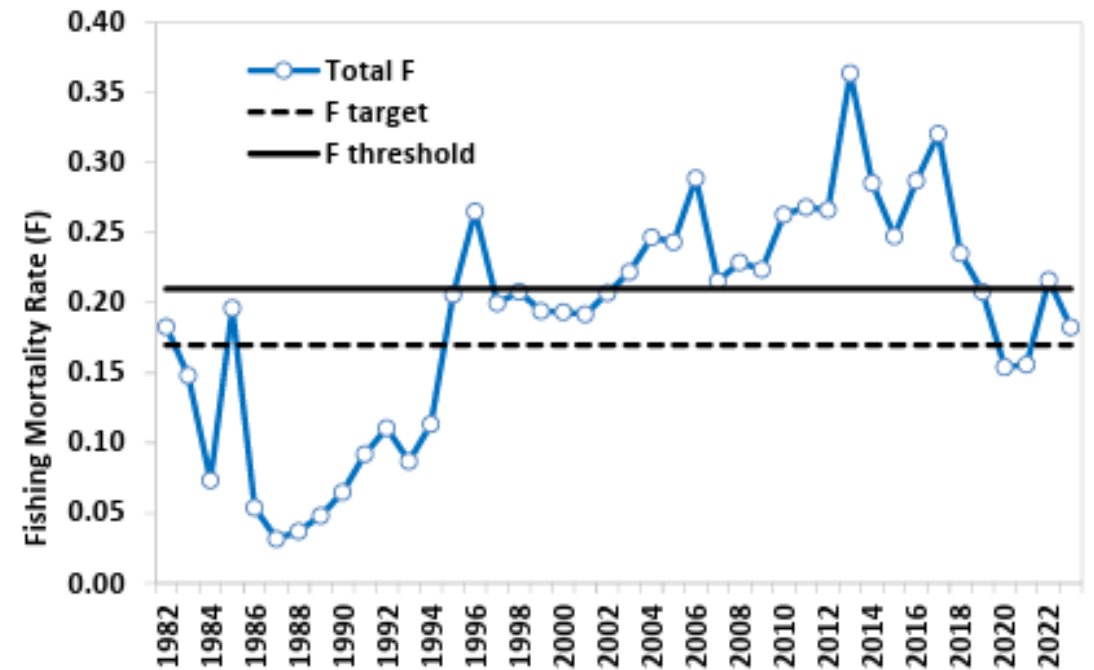
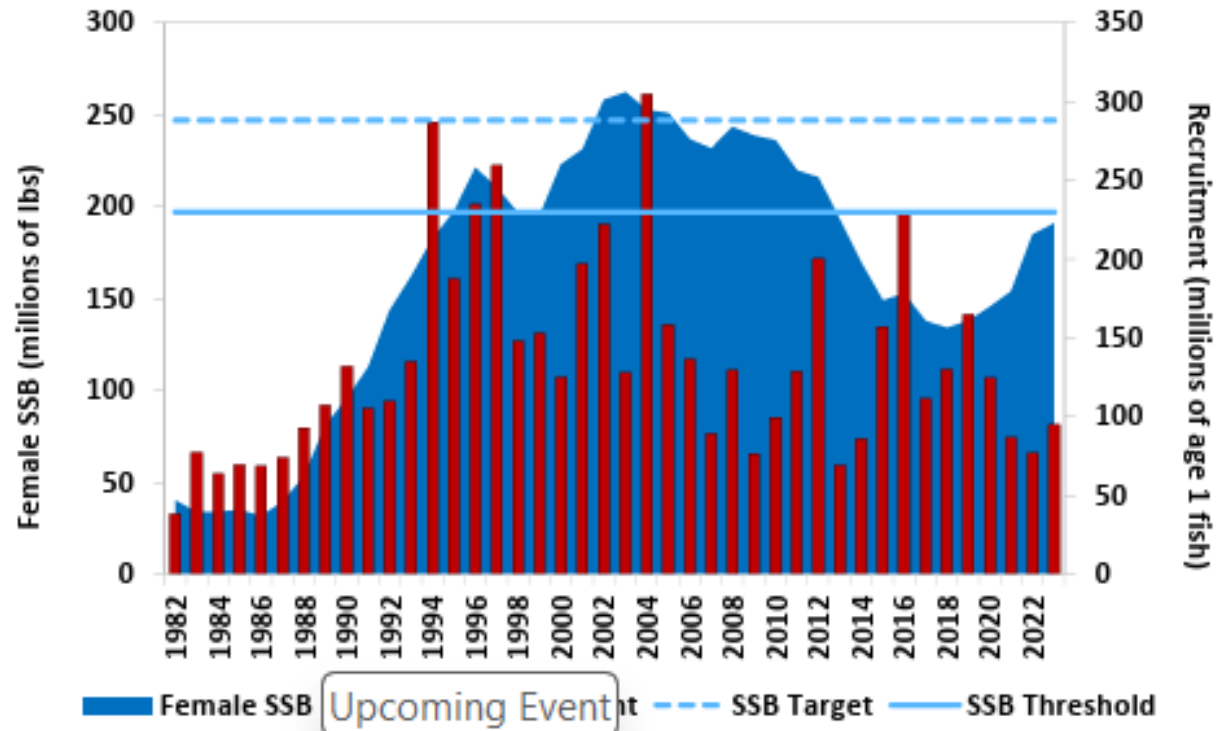
- Realized decrease driven by NY (-61%) & NJ (-41%) – bad fall weather cited, slot fish less available.
- 12% reduction in ocean directed trips (1^o/2^o target); 7% reduction coastwide, lowest number in past decade.
 - Behavior affected by regulations and fish availability, in addition to weather.
 - Declining releases, less small fish available.

[ASMFC 2025 FMP Review]

Massachusetts Division
of Marine Fisheries



2024 Stock Assessment Results; next assessment (benchmark with data through 2025) expected in August 2027



[ASMFC 2025 FMP Review]

Massachusetts Division
of Marine Fisheries



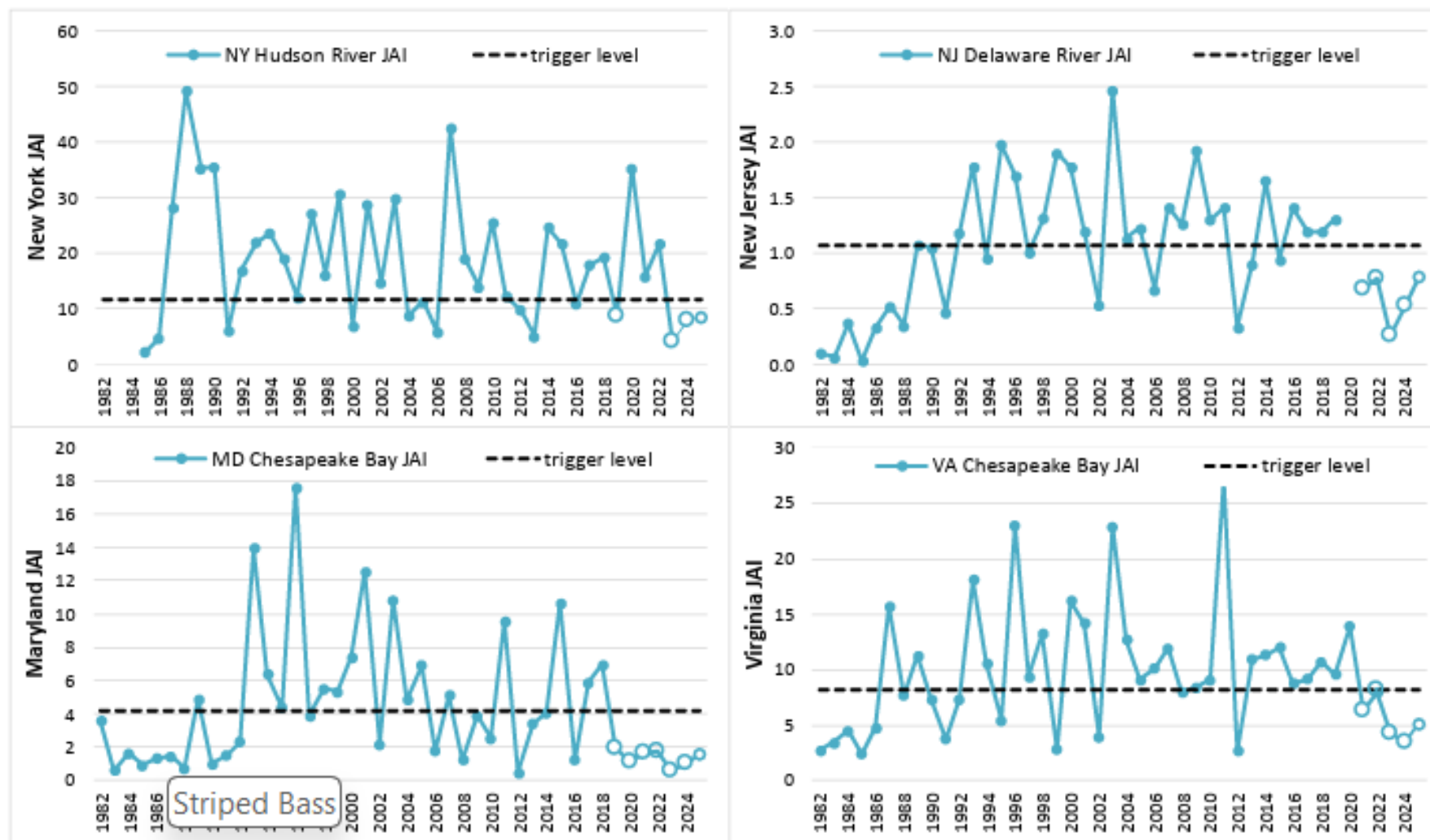


Figure 10. Juvenile abundance indices for New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia for 1982-2025 with recruitment trigger analysis for recent years. An open circle in the last three years indicates a value below the recruitment trigger level. The recruitment trigger is tripped if a JAI is below the trigger level for three consecutive years. Source: 2026 State Compliance Reports.

[ASMFC 2025 FMP Review]

Commercial Fisheries Commission Update

July 16 Meeting

- Economic development focused
 - Focus group presentation on economic importance of the commercial fishing industry to Massachusetts and economic development opportunities
 - Executive Office of Economic Development presentations: Seaport Economic Council, MassDevelopment, Maritime Strategy Initiative
 - USDA Office of Seafood, Mike Illenberg
 - MassPort
- Commercial Fisheries Commission Annual Report



Economic Development Opportunities for Massachusetts Commercial Fisheries

*Recommendations from the Economic Development Focus Group
Massachusetts Commercial Fisheries Commission*

July 16, 2026

Three Pillars of a Thriving MA Seafood Economy



The diagram consists of three identical rectangular boxes arranged horizontally. Each box has a dark blue background and a light gray rounded rectangle in the center. The text is centered within the light gray area. The first box contains the text 'Protecting Working Waterfronts', the second 'Invest in the Future of the Industry', and the third 'Increase Demand for MA Seafood'.

Protecting
Working
Waterfronts

Invest in the
Future of the
Industry

Increase
Demand for
MA Seafood

Profitable Fishing Businesses → Thriving Working Waterfronts → Resilient Coastal Communities

Pillar One: Protect and Modernize Working Waterfronts

01

Invest in ports and
infrastructure

Improve access for
commercial fishing
businesses

02

Protect Designated Port
Areas for Commercial
Fisheries

Pillar Two: Invest in the Future of the Industry

Invest in People

- Workforce development (#3)
- Training (#3)

Invest in Businesses

- Low interest loans (#4)
- Business succession (#6)
- Permit access (#4)

Pillar Two: Invest in the Future of the Industry

Invest in Innovation

- Research (#5)
- Innovation hubs (#7)
- Incubators (#7)

Build Resilience

- Emergency assistance (#8)
- Climate adaptation (#8)

Pillar Three: Increase Demand for MA Seafood

09

Incentivize
processors and
food
manufacturers

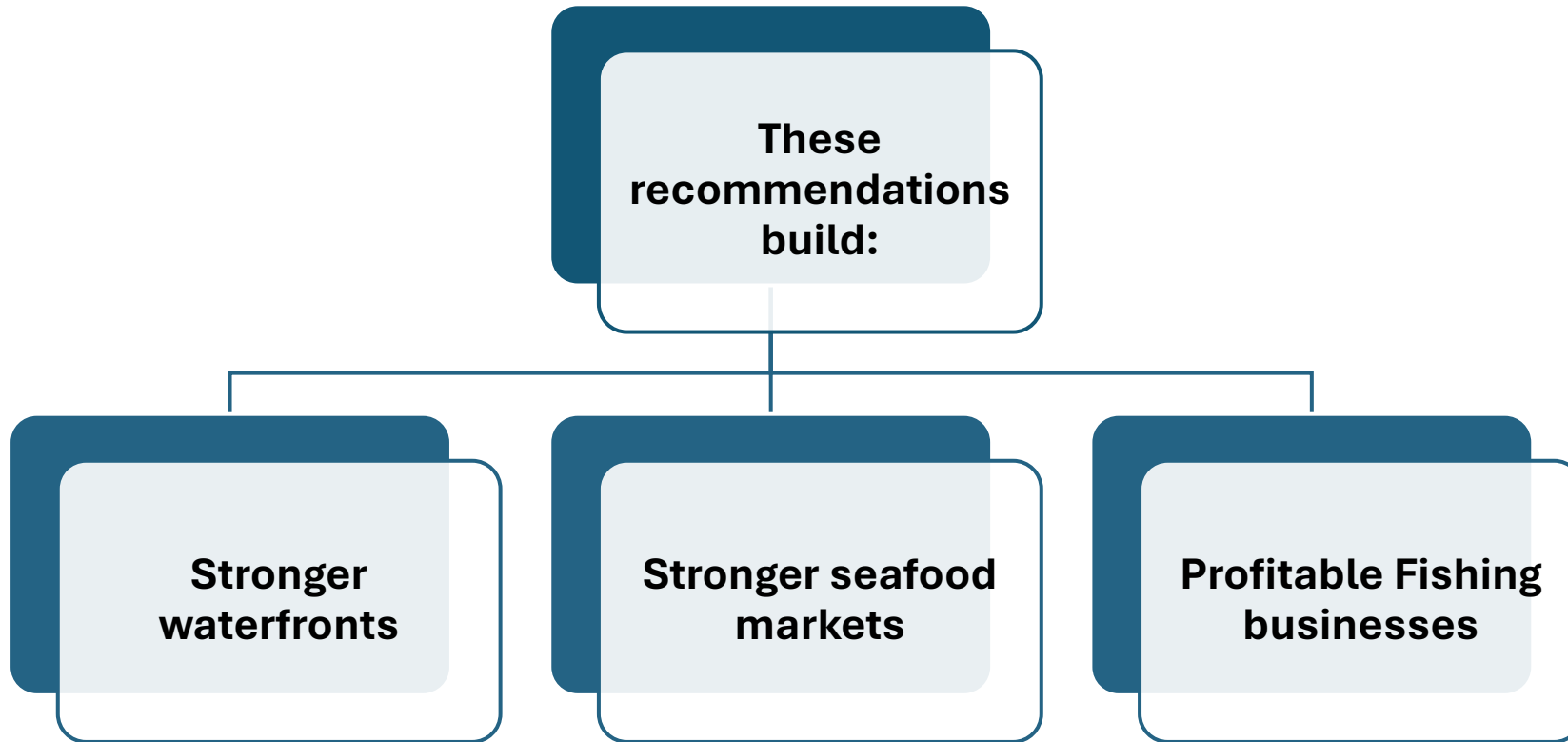
10

Increase
institutional
purchasing

11

Support new
seafood
products

Bringing It All Together: Building a Thriving Seafood Economy



Port Profile Report Update

Updated report to be released in September

- Overview of commercial fishing statewide and at the municipal level
- Describes available commercial fishing infrastructure at the port level as well as challenges to access and infrastructure
- Provides recommendations for future infrastructure improvements

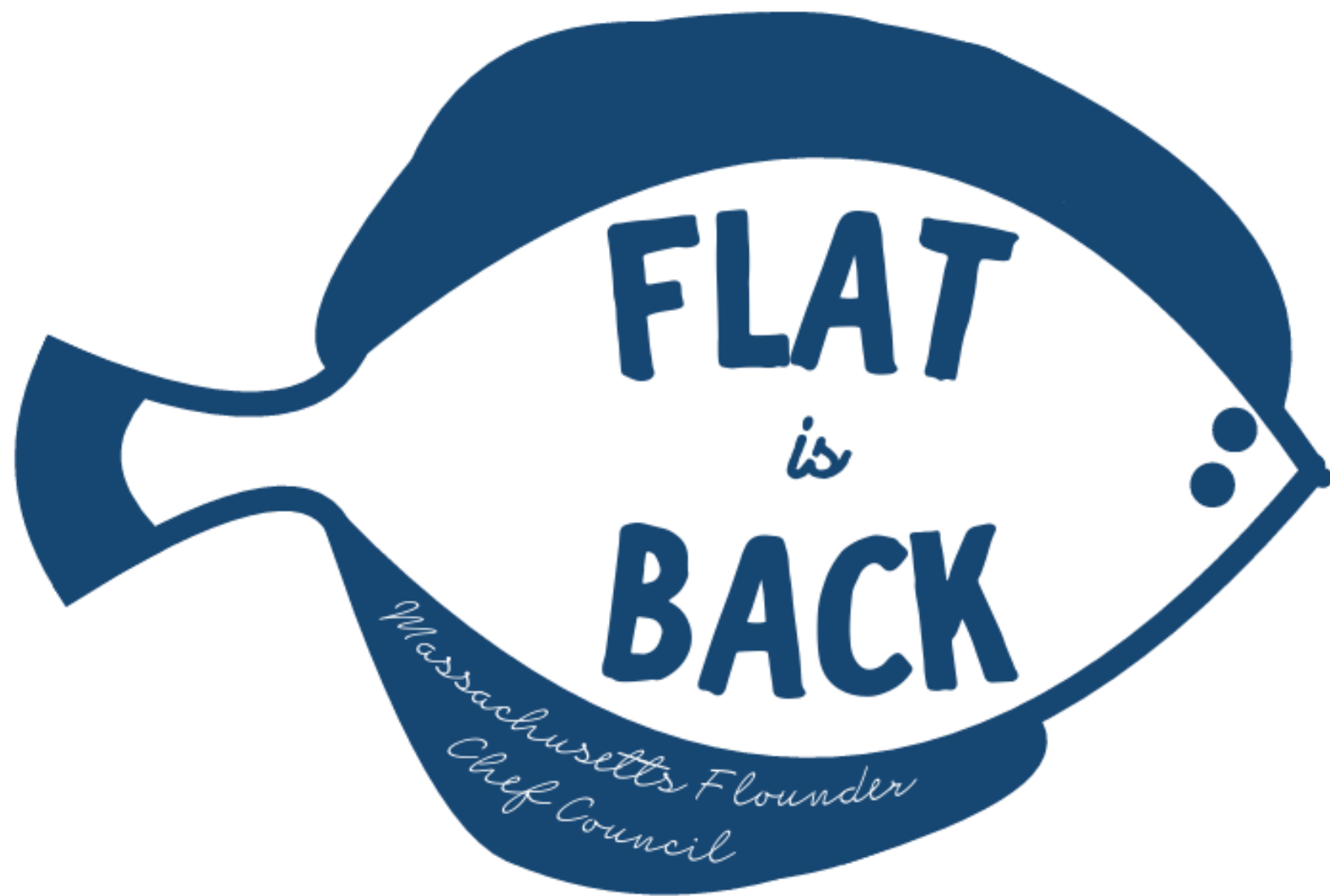
Data sources

- Harbormaster Survey
- Commercial Fisher Survey
- Commercial Fisheries Statistics data

Five-Year Update

- 10-year fisheries statistics time series
- Improved/updated survey questions





UNDERUTILIZED & UNDERVALUED FLOUNDER



MARKETING

Price volatility

PROCESSING

MANAGEMENT



MASSACHUSETTS FLOUNDER CHEF COUNCIL



KEVIN BURLESON - Straight Wharf Fish (Nantucket)

ANDREW CHADWICK - The Chatham Bars Inn (Chatham)

SASHA COLEMAN - Comfort Kitchen (Dorchester)

WILL GILSON - Puritan & Company, Puritan Oyster Bar, The Lexington, Geppetto, Cafe Beatrice, Amba Cambridge (Cambridge)

WILLIAM KOVEL - Catalyst Restaurant (Cambridge)

ANDREA PANG - Miraval Berkshires Resort and Spa (Lenox)

JOSH RIAZI - The Black Whale, National Club Mexican Cantina, Candela Cucina (New Bedford); Joe's Original Kitchen & Bar (Dartmouth)

JEREMY SEWALL - Row 34 (Boston, Cambridge, Burlington)

ROBERT SISCA - The Banks Seafood & Steak, Bistro Du Midi, Grill 23 & Bar (Boston); Harvest (Cambridge)



MASSACHUSETTS FLOUNDER CHEF COUNCIL



Chef Council Roles & Responsibilities

- Restaurant Signature Menu Feature: Seasonal Offering or Special (August & September)



- Social Media Posting: Two (2) posts from restaurant/chef social media channels including Instagram



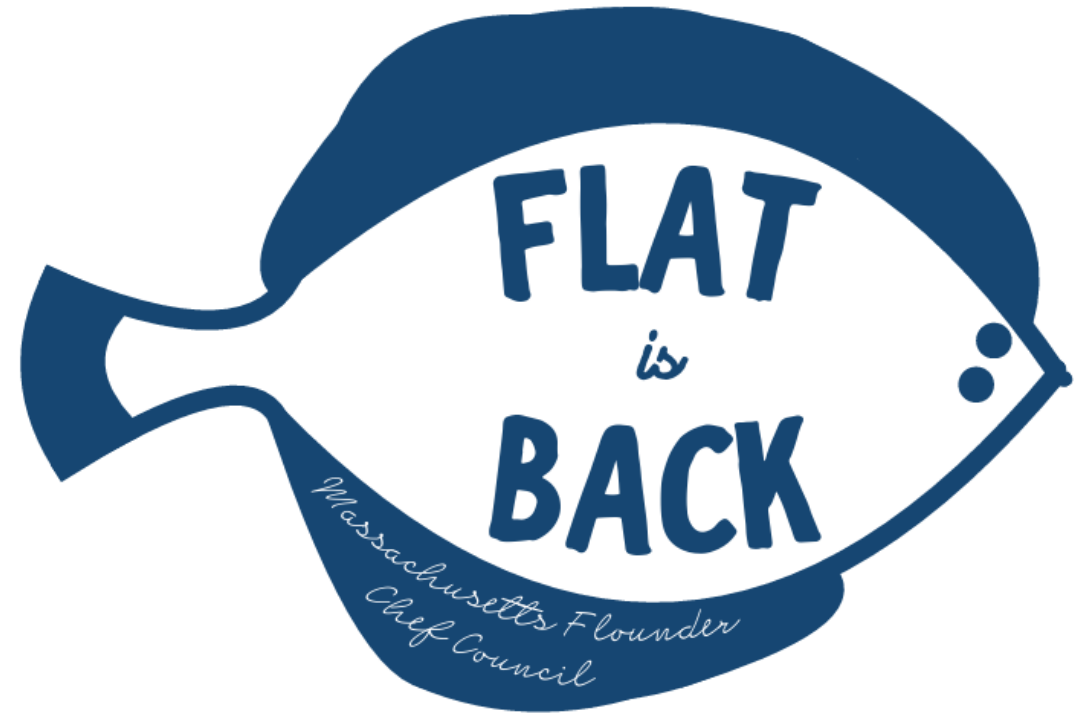
- Media Showcase Event (not public): Monday, September 14, 2026 at The Exchange Conference Center on Boston's Fish Pier

MASSACHUSETTS FLOUNDER CHEF COUNCIL



Press Release: Flat is Back August 17, 2026

- WBUR radio broadcast
- Boston Globe interview
- Cambridge Day
- Seafood Source
- ... and more!





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Maura T. Healey
Governor

Kimberly Driscoll
Lt. Governor

Rebecca L. Tepper
Secretary

Thomas K. O'Shea
Commissioner

Daniel J. McKiernan
Director

Memorandum

To: Dan McKiernan, Director Division of Marine Fisheries

From: Bob Glenn, Deputy Director

Date: Friday July 10, 2026

Subject: 2026 Nomination for the Belding Award

Introduction

In 1989 the David L. Belding Award was created to honor individuals who have done the most to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the Commonwealth's marine resources. Dr. David L. Belding was both a medical doctor as well as the Commonwealth's Marine Biologist for the first half of the 20th century, conducting two distinguished careers simultaneously in medicine and marine biology. Dr. Belding was extremely prolific, authoring dozens of papers on marine biology over half a century. His wide array of research in marine biology, and particularly local shellfish populations, is continually referenced having become a cornerstone for the work of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF).

This award may be granted annually at the discretion of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) upon an individual's nomination. Candidates may be nominated at any time by a member of the MFAC or DMF. In 2025, Mr. Henry Lind was honored with the award for his 50 plus years of stewardship and advocacy for the Commonwealth's shellfish resources and pivotal role in advancing training for municipal shellfish officers.

DMF Nominee

I would like to nominate Ms. Laura Ludwig for the David L. Belding Award. For the last 20 years Laura has been a passionate advocate and resolute practitioner for solving marine debris and derelict fishing gear issues in the coastal waters and on the shorelines of the Commonwealth and beyond.

In her role at the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies as the Marine Debris & Plastics Program Director, Laura developed and administers a highly successful at-sea derelict fishing gear assessment and removal program. Working collaboratively with scientists and commercial fisherman, Laura and her team utilize side-scan sonar to identify derelict fishing gear, and using grappling gear, haul it up off the sea-floor where it then can be returned (to its owner), repurposed, or recycled depending on its condition. Since 2013, Laura's pioneering efforts have

been responsible for removing 2,923 traps and a multitude of other nets and ropes, collectively weighing more than 224,000 pounds from Massachusetts coastal waters. In addition to the direct conservation benefit of these efforts, the data collected from her gear removal program has also substantially increased our understanding of the persistence of fishing gear debris in the ocean and the resulting impacts of ghost fishing.

Laura's work doesn't stop at the dock! She curates, engages, and mobilizes a 500 plus member Beach Brigade that conducts targeted beach clean-ups throughout Cape Cod and the South Coast each year. Through these efforts over 40,000 individual pieces fishing gear debris (bait bags, trap tags, lobster traps, aquaculture bags etc) and over 27,000 individual pieces of rope have been removed from our shorelines.

Laura was a key member of the Massachusetts Derelict Fishing Gear Task Force. This group studied and defined issues with Massachusetts state law that prevented efficient and timely clean-up of derelict fishing gear from our coastal waters and shorelines. Laura's insights and experience were key in developing a white paper presented to the Massachusetts Coastal Caucus, which provided pivotal information directly leading to changes to state law allowing for efficient wide-spread clean-up of derelict fishing gear.

Previously, Laura worked for the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation where she designed and implemented the region's first derelict fishing gear recovery and recycling program. She oversaw a 5-year multi-state commercial lobster rope exchange and recycling project that pioneered rope re-purposing efforts and brought us "lobster rope doormats"!

Laura's leadership and advocacy on marine debris and derelict fishing gear issues are exemplary. Her passion for the marine environment and our coastal culture is infectious, and her determination makes it very difficult to say no to her, even when her proposed work didn't always comport with state law! Laura's contributions to marine science and conservation are outstanding and reflect the true spirit of Dr. Belding's impact on marine science in the Commonwealth. I cannot imagine a more deserving candidate for the David L. Belding Award than Ms. Laura Ludwig. I hope the Commission will support this nomination to honor Laura's dedicated career and commitment to marine conservation in Massachusetts.

cc: S. Reed, Deputy Director,
S. Edmundson, Chair MFAC



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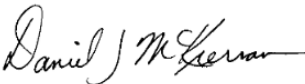
Rebecca L. Tepper
Secretary

Thomas K. O'Shea
Commissioner

Daniel J. McKiernan
Director

Memorandum

To: The Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

From: Daniel J. McKiernan, Director 

Date: August 18, 2026

Subject: History of David L. Belding Award

Introduction

Since 1989, the David L. Belding Award has been presented annually by the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) to recognize an individual's dedication to promoting the conservation and sustainable use of the Commonwealth's resources. Dr. David L. Belding was both a medical doctor and marine biologist in the early 1900's and authored dozens of papers on marine biology over half a century. His prolific scientific career produced substantial research, spanning from river herring to aquaculture, that is still referenced today.

The MFAC may choose to grant this award annually upon an individual's nomination, and candidates may be nominated at any time by a member of the MFAC or DMF staff. Since the first awardee over 35 years ago, Belding Award recipients have represented a wide range of expertise—recreational fishing advocates, science communicators, commercial fishermen, government scientists, life-long researchers, legislators, MFAC members, community leaders, and more.

Prior recipients

Prior recipients of the David L. Belding Award include:

- Elizabeth Stromeyer (1990), Longtime MFAC Chairman and tackle shop owner
- Lester Smith (1991), Recreational fisheries advocate
- Henry Lyman (1992), Founder of Saltwater Sportsman Magazine and recreational fisheries advocate
- Frank Grice (1993), Former DMF director and NOAA fisheries official

- Frank Mirarchi (1994), Commercial fisherman, former MFAC chairman, and former New England Fishery Management Council member, participant in many cooperative research studies
- Jack Crowley (1995), Marine educator
- Henry Souza (1996), Commercial fishermen who participated in extensive conservation engineering gear trials to reduce bycatch in trawl fisheries
- Bob Pond (1997), Striped bass conservation advocate
- Stormy Mayo (1998), Right whale researcher and founder of the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies
- Steve Clark (1999), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fisheries scientist
- Tony Verga (2000), Former MFAC member, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) delegate, and state legislator
- Bruce Tarr (2001), State legislator and fisheries advocate
- Arnold Howe (2002), Founder of DMF's trawl survey, longtime DMF employee
- Steve Murawski (2003), NOAA fisheries stock assessment specialist
- Kevin Stokesbury (2004), UMass Dartmouth fisheries researcher, scallop fishery expert
- Donald Anderson (2005), Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) biological oceanographer and red tide specialist
- Richard Quinn (2007), US Fish and Wildlife service expert on fish passage
- John Hughes (2012), Former DMF employee who founded the state lobster hatchery on Martha's Vineyard
- Paul Diodati (2015), Former DMF director, former striped bass and northern shrimp fisheries expert
- Bill Adler (2016), Commercial fisherman and longtime member of the MFAC
- Arthur DeCosta (2017) commercial fisherman and participant in numerous collaborative scientific studies on lobster and whelk fisheries
- Mark Amorello (2022) Former MFAC member and Chair, and for contributions to river herring conservation
- J. Michael Hickey (2023) Long-time DMF Shellfish Program Leader

- Dr. Michael Armstrong (2024) DMF Deputy Director, Stock Assessment Specialist, Researcher, and Sportfish Program Leader
- Henry Lind (2025) Eastham Conservation Agent, Shellfish Constable, Harbor Master and Natural Resources Director; MA Shellfish Officers Assoc. leadership and developer of constable training programs.

Fishery Permit Eligibility: Limits on Residency-Based Requirements for Permitting

Tori LaBate

Assistant General Counsel

Department of Fish and Game

Issue

- Limiting entry to commercial fisheries to reduce pressure on population.
- Can residency be a requirement for access to Massachusetts' Fisheries?
- Basing eligibility for a permit on residency raises constitutional issues.

Legal Analysis

- What does the Constitution say?
 - Privileges and Immunities Clause (U.S. Const. art. IV, § 2, cl. 1)
 - “The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.”
- What does the Supreme Court say?
 - Two part analysis for P&I cases
 - Whether the privilege being regulated is protected by P&I
 - Commercial Fishing is protected
 - Whether the discrimination is narrowly tailored to meet a substantial state interest
 - For example, interest may be conserving a population that is declining
 - Non-residents must be “peculiar source of evil” that is causing the issue

Case Example

- Toomer v. Witsell
 - Laws aimed at conserving the state's shrimp population
 - Charged non-citizens 10x the license fee
 - Court found this to be a ban-in-effect on non-citizens
 - State claimed that non-citizens had larger boats and different fishing methods than citizens
 - Court said the remedy was too drastic, not narrowly tailored

Is it ever permissible to discriminate against non-residents?

- Carlson v. State
 - 3x higher commercial license fee
 - Whether the increase of license fee equalizes the burden of fisheries management. (state residents pay taxes towards management)

Take Aways

- Treating non-citizens worse than citizens in commercial licenses implicates the Privileges and Immunity Clause
- Regulations must be narrowly tailored to meet a substantial state interest
- A ban or a ban-in-effect on non-residents will not be upheld