



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission August 26, 2026 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the August 26, 2026 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This business meeting was held at the Weston Public Library. A recording of this meeting can be made available upon request and all meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#).

Action Items

2026 Belding Award Nomination. The MFAC unanimously approved DMF's nomination of Laura Ludwig to receive the 2026 Belding Award. Laura is recognized for her contributions as an advocate and resolute practitioner in solving issues relevant to marine debris and derelict fishing gear in the Commonwealth.

Discussion Items

Emergency Regulations to Extend White Shark Fishing Restrictions. In late July 2026, DMF enacted emergency regulations to expand existing gear restrictions developed to curtail shore-based white shark fishing to include the Town of Nantucket. These gear restrictions prohibit the use of a metal or wire leader exceeding 18 inches length with a hook with a gap exceeding 5/8 inch when fishing from shore from Plymouth Point around the coast of Cape Cod Bay and the Atlantic coast of Cape Cod to Stage Harbor, including all of Monomony Island, and now the Town of Nantucket as well. This emergency action responded to changes in angler behavior and the expansion of illegal shore-based white shark fishing to Nantucket this year resulting in significant public safety concerns and user-group conflicts. DMF intends to allow this emergency regulation to expire this fall but will consider amendments to its shark fishing rules for 2027 to better address concerns relative to the targeting of white sharks. Additionally, DMF will host a public meeting on Nantucket on September 10 to discuss this emergency action and future regulatory considerations.

Quota Managed Species Update. DMF provided the MFAC with an update on the performance of 2026 quota managed fisheries through late August. This included striped bass, menhaden, summer flounder, bait horseshoe crabs, black sea bass, scup, bluefish, and spiny dogfish.

[Interstate Fisheries Management](#). DMF provided a routine update on the August 2026 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) meeting and the August joint meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and the ASMFC.

The ASMFC's Spiny Dogfish Board approved an experimental weekly aggregate limit proposal to exempt certain fishers from the current 7,500 pound trip limit and authorize a 37,500 pound weekly aggregate limit. This is being done to evaluate whether greater regulatory flexibility will enhance economic productivity and quota utilization. This program is contingent on the issuance of a federal Exempted Fishery Permit from NOAA Fisheries. If approved, the program will allow up to 50 vessels from across New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut to fish under the weekly aggregate limit throughout the remainder of this calendar year or until 80% of the Northern Region's 2026 quota is landed.

The Menhaden Board approved Draft Addendum II to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for public comment. This draft addendum proposes revisions to the Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap, including reducing it, establishing quota periods, and linking future changes to changes in the coastwide quota. Public hearings will be held during early fall with a New England states webinar on September 29. At the upcoming November ASMFC meeting, the Menhaden Board is expected to consider final action on Addendum II, set the coastwide quota for upcoming year(s), and revisit discussions regarding quota reallocation across states.

The Striped Bass Board approved a letter to NOAA's Office of Aquaculture in opposition to the development of offshore striped bass aquaculture. The Board also received the Fishery Management Plan Review for 2025, which documented a 25% reduction in total 2025 fishery removals (number of fish) driven primarily by reduced recreational catch and effort. Public discourse indicates that some see this as highlighting ongoing poor fishing conditions and foreshadowing a pending stock collapse given ongoing recruitment failure, whereas others view this as the fishery achieving conservation objectives without additional regulation. Management action is unlikely prior to completion of the ongoing benchmark stock assessment, which is due to be presented to the Board in August 2027. However, the Board has assigned a series of tasks to inform future decision making and this work is expected to commence this fall.

The Tautog Board postponed the approval of Draft Addendum I for public comment until stock projections can be updated with realized 2025 catch and projected 2026 catch. The draft addendum does not propose changes to the Massachusetts-Rhode Island region, but due to the magnitude of reductions proposed in other regions, the timing of the next tautog stock assessment was moved up from 2029 to 2028 to incorporate the revised MRIP numbers sooner given the contribution of the recreational fishery to total removals.

The Winter Flounder Board agreed to a process for improved coordination with the New England Fishery Management Council in the setting of annual catch limit specifications to enable potential state waters management flexibility.

The Lobster Board received an update on the Gulf of Maine Lobster Management Strategy Evaluation. There is also an opportunity for public comment through October 14 on NOAA Fisheries' Request for Information regarding the potential use of ropeless gear.

The MAFMC and ASMFC are holding a Recreational Sector Separation Workshop on September 23–24 to gather stakeholder input on the range of alternatives for mode-specific management approaches that would assign different measures to the for-hire fishery and for-hire permitting and reporting requirements to support such approaches. The draft amendment that the workshop is designed to inform is specific to summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish recreational management. A workshop report will be provided to the ASMFC and the MAFMC to help develop the options for public comment next year.

The MAFMC and ASMFC did not approve changes to previously set specifications establishing the recreational harvest limits and commercial quotas and measures for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. However, revisions were made to provide NOAA Fisheries with greater flexibility in managing the Winter period scup quotas. This includes allowances to waive season overages if the annual quota is not exceeded and use projected landings and discretion to assess in-season trip limit adjustments during the Winter I fishery (January 1–April 30).

Commercial Fisheries Commission Update. DMF discussed the happenings at the July 16 Commercial Fisheries Commission (CFC) meeting in Boston. This meeting focused on economic development and the CFC approved its 2025 annual report for the Massachusetts legislature. DMF then provided the MFAC with a brief overview of the CFC Economic Development Focus Group's strategic framework to create a thriving seafood economy in the Commonwealth. Lastly, DMF indicated that the 5-year Port Profile Project update will be released in September 2026.

Seafood Marketing. DMF's Seafood Marketing Program kicked off its "Flat is Back" campaign to improve the marketing of underutilized and undervalued flounder species. This campaign involves a council of ten chefs throughout the Commonwealth who will develop special flounder offerings at their restaurants, promote these offerings through social media, and facilitate a media showcase event at the Boston Fish Pier on September 14. The purpose of this campaign is to encourage the consumption of flounder species with the goal of increasing demand and ultimately the ex-vessel value provided to commercial fishers.

Presentations

Limits on Residency-Based Requirements for Commercial Fisheries Permitting. The General Counsel's Office for the Department of Fish and Game provided a legal analysis on residency-based requirements for commercial fisheries permitting. This explained that residency requirements are generally considered to be unconstitutional under the privileges and immunities clause unless they are narrowly tailored to meet a substantial state interest of which non-residents must be a "peculiar source of evil".

Next Meeting

The MFAC will meet again on Thursday, October 22, 2026.