



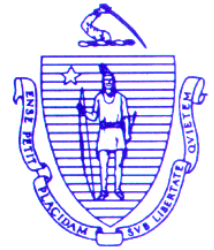
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October 25, 2016

Marine Fisheries Advisory

DMF Seeks Public Input on Potential Changes to Commercial Fluke Rules

Anticipating the upcoming 30% cut in the summer flounder (fluke) quota for 2017, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is welcoming public input on possible amendments to the state's 2017 commercial harvest rules.

Massachusetts' commercial fluke quota (roughly 6.82% of the coastwide commercial quota) is managed with long-standing seasons, gear restrictions, trip limits, closed days, and a minimum size. Period I, from January 1 through April 22, has a target allocation of 30% of the quota, with the remainder going to Period II, from April 23 through December 31. The following rules apply:

Season	Gear	Trip Limit	Open Days	Min. Size
February 1–April 22	Nets	500 lb.*	Sun–Sat	14”
April 23–June 9	Nets/Longlines	100 lb.	Sun–Sat	14”
	Handlines/Rod & Reel	0 lb.	n/a	14”
June 10– December 31/Quota	Nets	300 lb.	Sun–Thu	14”
	Hooks	200 lb.	Sun–Thu	14”

* LOA program authorizes weekly 1,000 pound limit. Trip limit drops to 100 lb. and LOA program is discontinued when 25% of the annual quota is projected to be harvested.

A decline in the fluke population documented in the 2015 and 2016 stock assessments has resulted in the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council decreasing the coastwide annual catch limit. Consequently, Massachusetts' annual commercial quota has declined by nearly 50% from 2015 (760,795 pounds) to 2017 (385,988 pounds).

With this reduction to the state's quota, the summertime directed fishery beginning June 10 could close prior to the end of July. DMF seeks comments on the appropriateness of maintaining the current seasonal allocations, fishery start dates, the number of closed fishing days, and the trip limits.

DMF will review all public input with its Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission and determine if rulemaking and public hearings are necessary.

DMF will accept public comment through 5PM on November 4, 2016. Please address all comments to Director David Pierce and either send by e-mail to marine.fish@state.ma.us or by post to 251 Causeway Street, Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114.

For more information regarding the management of marine fisheries in Massachusetts, please visit our website: www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.