

Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

Final 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