



## MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission June 19, 2024 Meeting Summary

---

This document serves as a brief summary of the June 19, 2024 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This business meeting was held in-person at DMF's Cat Cove Marine Laboratory in Salem, MA. All meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#). MFAC meetings for the second half of 2024 have not yet been scheduled. Please check the [MFAC's website](#) for additional information.

### Action Items

*Letter to EOEEA Advocating for Additional Resources for the Massachusetts Environmental Police.* The MFAC reviewed a letter to Secretary Tepper advocating that additional funding and resources be provided to the Massachusetts Environmental Police to enhance marine fisheries enforcement. The MFAC approved the draft letter with two additions: (1) the letter should include a goal for the number of field officers consistent with historic levels; and (2) the letter should advocate for dedicated officers on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard and state-supported housing for these officers.

*Belding Award.* Under other business, Dr. Mike Armstrong was nominated to receive the 2024 Belding Award in recognition of his career's contributions to fisheries science and management. The nomination was approved and the Belding Award was presented to Dr. Armstrong at the conclusion of the June 19 business meeting. Dr. Armstrong—a long-time DMF employee and currently the agency's Deputy Director—is retiring this summer.

### Discussion Items

*2024 Commercial Fishery Performance.* DMF provided an early season update on fishery performance that focused on overall trends, as well as, a closer look at the performance of the menhaden, squid, summer flounder, whelk, and horseshoe crab fisheries to date.

*Update on Legislation Potential Impacting DMF and Marine Fisheries.* There are several pieces of draft legislation being considered that may impact DMF and marine fisheries. The Senate budget was approved and included an amendment to G.L. c. 130 to exempt fisheries from the Wetlands Protection Act, similar to what is accommodated for other food production activities. The purpose of this bill would be to resolve issues related to municipalities using the Wetlands Protection Act as a means of regulating fishing gear. The House and Senate budgets now go to Conference Committee for reconciliation. The House and Senate budgets also include funding to SMAST for a PhD student to conduct a Management Strategy Evaluation for the whelk fishery. There is also continued funding for SMAST to conduct oceanographic modeling that DMF is using to assess buffer zone closures around wastewater treatment plants. Lastly, there is a stand-alone bill to pursue the statutory amendments recommended by DMF's Derelict Gear Task Force. This bill delineates the difference between active fishing gear that should be treated as private property and abandoned, lost, or derelict fishing gear that DMF and the MFAC will be able to regulate and permit how to remove and clean up. This bill reportedly favorably from committee and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

*Department of Fish and Game Strategic Plan.* The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) was finalizing its five-year strategic plan. The plan boasts three themes: (1) biodiversity and climate; (2) environmental justice; and (3) relevancy, visibility, and capacity. Additionally, it sets five leadership priorities to achieve goals relevant to these themes: (1) protect and conserve landscapes; (2) restore habitat and habitat connectivity; (3) decarbonize and enhance carbon sequestration; (4) create equitable access to nature; and (5) increase food security. In the marine environment, this may include finding resources and partnerships to protect and increase eel grass and saltmarsh habitat, improve fish passage, improve public access and public outreach, and to develop food security programs with the seafood industry. Additionally, the Department was working to execute the Governor Healey's Executive Order on Biodiversity. This executive order requires DFG to review existing biodiversity and conservation efforts and establish goals and strategies for 2030, 2040, and 2050. The Department intends to host two public listening sessions in July.