



**MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission  
March 19, 2024 Meeting Summary**

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This document serves as a brief summary of the March 19, 2024 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This business meeting was held virtually via Zoom. All meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#) and the meeting recording has been published to [DMF's YouTube Channel](#).

**Action Items**

The MFAC reviewed and voted on numerous final recommendations from DMF to amend certain commercial fishing regulations and these regulations are expected to go into effect for 2024.

1. Horseshoe Crab Management. The MFAC approved final DMF recommendations to: (1) adopt an April 15 – June 7 spawning closure whereby all harvest of horseshoe crabs is prohibited; (2) establish a commercial bait fishery trip limit of 300 horseshoe crabs that increases automatically to 400 horseshoe crabs if 50% or more of the quota remains available on August 1 and decreases automatically to 200 horseshoe crabs if 80% of the quota is taken on or before September 15; and (3) mirror federal harvest prohibitions within the boundaries of the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge and Cape Cod National Seashore. DMF will include horseshoe crabs in the Consecutive Daily Trip Limit program for the summertime trawl fishery south of Cape Cod.
2. Commercial Striped Bass. The MFAC approved final DMF recommendations to: (1) reduce the number of open fishing days per week from one to three by eliminating Mondays and retaining Tuesdays and Wednesdays; (2) automatically add Thursday as an open fishing day on August 1 if 30% or more of the quota remains available; (3) require commercial fishers and dealers be present at primary purchase; and (4) require dealers tag striped bass upon receipt of fish at the primary purchase.
3. Commercial Menhaden. The MFAC approved final DMF recommendations to: (1) start the directed purse seine fishery on May 15; (2) waive the 50% quota use trigger that drops the limited entry trip limit to 25,000 pounds if it is not met by September 1; (3) clarify that Fridays remain a closed fishing day for purse seines when the trip limit is 120,000 pounds; and (4) add a conditional date of October 15 to increase the trip limit to 360,000 pounds should at least 10% of the quota remain.
4. Summer Flounder. The MFAC approved final DMF recommendations to: (1) decrease the Period I trip limit from 10,000 pounds to 5,000 pounds; (2) automatically decrease the Period II trip limit if 75% of the quota is taken before August 1; (3) reduce the quota use threshold from 95% to 90% to trigger elevated trip limits for the fall fishery; and (4) reduce the elevated fall fishery trip limit from 10,000 pounds to 5,000 pounds.
5. State Waters Groundfish. The MFAC approved final DMF recommendation to reduce the spatial footprint of the May groundfish closure by moving the southern boundary from Boston (42° 20' N) to Nahant (42° 25' N). DMF will also investigate developing a consecutive daily trip limit program for groundfish endorsement permit holders.
6. Atlantic Mackerel. The MFAC approved final DMF recommendations to adopt a 5,000 pound state waters trip limit for Atlantic mackerel that is reduced to 2,500 pounds once 80% of the

annual coastwide quota is taken. Exempt from this are fish weirs and federal permit holders transiting state waters in possession of non-conforming quantities of fish lawfully taken in federal waters.

7. Whelk Gauge. The MFAC approved final DMF recommendation to stay the current schedule to increase whelk gauge sizes until 2027.
8. Smooth Dogfish. The MFAC approved final DMF recommendation to increase the trip limit for smooth dogfish from 100 to 300 pounds. DMF will also investigate adding smooth dogfish to the Consecutive Daily Trip Limit program for the summertime trawl fishery south of Cape Cod.
9. Shellfish. The MFAC approved final DMF recommendations to: (1) revise *Vp* icing requirements consistent with the pending 2024 *Vp* Control Plan; (2) clarify that the most specific alpha-numeric sequence for a shellfish growing area be recorded on the shellfish harvester tag; (3) clarify that only ice made from an approved source (e.g., potable water, salt water ice from a growing area classified as Approved or Conditionally Approved and in the Open Status) be applied to shellfish for any purpose; (4) adopt a state-wide night closure of ½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise but maintain the allowance for state managed mobile gear fisheries for shellfish to occur from 6AM to 6PM during the winter months; and (5) allow the primary sale of shellfish at a municipally managed lot nearby the landing site subject to DMF approval.

### **Final Permitting Actions**

DMF briefed the MFAC on several final permitting regulations the agency intended to pursue for 2024. The first set of changes affect permit transferability and will: (1) allow the transfer of latent but otherwise transferable endorsements in a transfer to an immediate family member; and (2) relax the transferability standards for black sea bass, tautog, and fluke endorsements from actively fished four out of the past five years to two out of the past five years. The second set of changes are housekeeping adjustments and include: (1) updating the definition of immediate family to be inclusive of step and adoptive relationships; (2) allowing the electronic display of commercial fishing permits; and (3) eliminating an outdated reference to the Coastal Lobster Permit Waiting List.

### **Emergency Actions to Set Recreational Fishing Limits**

DMF briefed the MFAC on two proposals to use the agency's emergency authority to adjust recreational fishing rules for May 1 2024.

1. Summer Flounder. To achieve a mandatory 28% reduction in summer flounder harvest, DMF is pursuing a May 24 – September 23 open fishing season with a 17.5" minimum size for vessel-based anglers and 16.5" minimum size for shore-based anglers, and a 5-fish bag limit. These rules will be reevaluated after 2025.
2. Scup. To achieve a mandatory 10% reduction in scup harvest, DMF is pursuing a May 1 – December 31 open season and an 11" minimum size for vessel-based anglers and a 9.5" minimum size for shore based angler. The bag limit will remain at 30-fish per angler with a 40-fish bag limit for anglers onboard for-hire vessels during the May 1 – June 30 bonus season. These rules will be reevaluated after 2025.
3. Black Sea Bass. To ensure the fishery continues to open on the third Saturday of May, DMF is adjusting the open season to occur May 18 – September 3. The bag limit and size limit will remain at 4-fish and 16.5", respectively. These rules will be reevaluated after this season.
4. Striped Bass Fileting. To comply with Addendum II to the Fishery Management Plan, DMF will clarify that striped bass retained by private anglers be kept whole when on the water or at an adjacent parcel of land. The for-hire allowance to filet will be maintained with the following caveats: (1) this activity may occur at sea or while at the dock prior to customers departing the vessel; (2) racks must be retained in a manner that does not interfere with species identification

or total length measurement until such a time that the vessel has docked and all customers from that trip have departed the vessel; and (3) at least two square inches of skin must remain intact on each filet and no person may be in possession of more than two filets.

**Next Meeting**

The MFAC will meet again on April 23, 2024. Please check the [MFAC's website](#) for additional information.