



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission November 19, 2024 Meeting Summary

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

Action Item

Election of MFAC Vice-Chair. This action item was delayed until the December 2024 MFAC business meeting.

Items for Future Public Hearing

Commercial Menhaden Management. DMF reviewed a three-part draft public hearing proposal affecting the management of the commercial menhaden fishery. The MFAC supported DMF taking these items to public hearing this winter. The proposals are described below:

1. Rescind the 90% quota use trigger that drops the limited entry fishery's trip limit from 25,000 pounds to 6,000 pounds or revise it to be in the range of 95-98% quota use. The current approach is designed to allow continued bait harvest when the fish are available inshore by slowing down landings and avoiding a quota closure. However, at current quota and participation levels, the 10% set-aside for the small-scale fishery is too large and impedes the utilization of the quota. Industry is also interested in utilizing the full quota in order to access the Episodic Event Set-Aside (EESA). Note that there is an inherent risk of a seining closure if the state takes 100% of its quota and the EESA is exhausted and quota transfers from other states are not available.
2. Use the August 1, 2023 control dates for the Menhaden Endorsement and CAP-Purse Seine Endorsement to further limit access to the menhaden fishery beginning in 2026. This would include requiring a certain activity threshold be met prior to the control date to renew the limited entry Menhaden Endorsement and limiting access to the CAP-Purse Seine Endorsement to only those who held the permit by the control date. Additionally, DMF could then update the CAP-Purse Seine control date rule to further restrict permit access in the future based on activity criteria. This is being proposed to address the level of latent effort in the fishery and concerns this latent effort will be activated due to declining quotas for herring and mackerel.
3. Consider a pilot program that authorizes two similarly permitted and rigged vessels to share catch from the other's seine nets. The intent of this program is to prevent slippage and enhance efficiency and reduce gear conflicts by reducing the number of sets permit holders need to make to catch their limit. This program could be suspended based on landing rates or concerns about program misuse or permit activation.

Commercial Summer Flounder Management. DMF reviewed its proposal to affect the management of the commercial summer flounder fishery. For Period I (January 1 – April 22), DMF is proposing to reduce the trip limit from 5,000 pounds to 2,000 pounds by an in-season adjustment for 2025 and by a regulatory change thereafter. DMF will also take comment on eliminating the authorization for the

multi-state program beginning in 2025 and for reducing the Period I quota allocation from 30% to as low as 15% for 2026 and beyond. For the Period II Summertime Fishery (April 23 – September 30), DMF is proposing to drop the initial trip limit from 600 pounds for net fishers and 400 pounds for hook fishers to 500 pounds for net fishers and 325 pounds for hook fishers; adjust the quota-use based trip limit trigger that drops trip limits in-season from 75% quota use on or before August 1 to 75% quota use on or before August 15; and adopting a new quota-use based trip limit trigger to reduce trip limits to no more than 200 pounds for all gear types if 90% of the quota is taken on or before September 1. For the summertime fishery, DMF will also take public comment on eliminating Fridays and Saturdays as open fishing days and amending the multi-day program for trawlers. The purpose of these proposals is to ensure adequate quota is available to the commercial fishery during the summertime and early fall when the fish are accessible to most permit holders and of higher market value. The MFAC supported DMF initiating rule making on these proposals this winter.

Discussion Items

Protected Species Update. DMF staff provided an update on protected species monitoring and management. This included an update on the right whale population estimate; upcoming Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan rule making expectations; NOAA Fisheries' ship speed rule; the development of a passive acoustic monitoring network for right whales; DMF's on-demand gear research; and the status of DMF's Incidental Take Permit application.

Shellfish Advisory Panel Update. DMF staff briefed the MFAC on the recent November 6, 2024 Shellfish Advisory Panel Meeting. The briefing focused on the Aquaculture License Transfer Working Group; the Hatchery Seed Working Group; DMF's reclassification of growing areas due to wastewater discharges; DMF shellfish program personnel; and the status of DMF's depuration plant facility in Newburyport.

MFAC Law Enforcement Focus Group. DMF staff briefed the MFAC on the recent November 13, 2024 MFAC Law Enforcement Focus Group meeting. This briefing addressed the catch of lobsters by trawlers; total length measurement of striped bass; commercial striped bass sales; buoy line marking rules; recreational targeting of white sharks; record keeping requirements to possess spiny and smooth dogfish fins; the potential to develop false albacore and bonito limits; and volumetric weight equivalencies in the menhaden fishery.

Presentations. DMF provided the MFAC with two presentations. The first was an update on diadromous fish runs and restoration work. The second dealt with DMF rolling out an option to renew commercial fishing permits online for 2025.

Upcoming Meetings. The next MFAC meeting is scheduled for December 17, 2024. It will be held virtually.