



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission October 29, 2024 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the October 29, 2024 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This business meeting was held in-person at the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Field Headquarters in Westborough. All meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#).

Action Items

Implementation Deadline for the Biological Measures in Addendum XXVII to the American Lobster Plan
In 2023, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) approved Addendum XXVII to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This included: (1) restrictions on trap tag issuance; (2) standardizing v-notch and maximum size rules for the Outer Cape Cod (OCC) Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA); and (3) a series biological measures affecting minimum and maximum sizes for OCCLCMA, LCMA 1 (Gulf of Maine), and LCMA 3 (Offshore Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank) to be triggered based on decline in recruitment of the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank stock. The implementation of this addendum was scheduled for January 1, 2025 and was previously approved by the MFAC in April 2024. However, in the interim, the ASMFC initiated and approved Addendum XXXI to delay implementation until July 1, 2025 to potentially coordinate regulatory changes with Canada's maritime fisheries in the Gulf of Maine to reduce potential trade complications resulting from having differing minimum size standards across jurisdictions. DMF recommended and the MFAC approve this slight delay in implementation.

Items for Future Public Hearing

Prohibition on Use and Sale of Pacific Lugworms. DMF will take to public hearing a proposal to prohibit the possession and sale of Pacific lugworms in the Commonwealth. This responds to reports that these animals were being sold and used as bait and seeks to address potential biosecurity issues. Of specific concern is the introduction of pathogens, including White Spot Syndrome which infects and kills crustaceans and Convert Mortality Nodavirus which can infect a variety of finfish, crustaceans, and shellfish.

Discussion Items

2024 Quota Management Update. DMF provided an update on overall performance trends for quota managed fisheries in 2024. The presentation focused on the several fisheries that were closed since the September MFAC business meeting—black sea bass, horseshoe crab, tautog — as well as those that remain open—menhaden, scup, and bluefish.

Federal Fisheries Management Update. DMF briefed the MFAC on recent happenings at the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC). This included a review of the NEFMC's September 2024 meeting and a synopsis of anticipated issues to be discussed at the NEFMC's December 2024 meeting. The briefing focused on: (1) recent Council elections, including Massachusetts delegates—John Pappalardo and Melanie Griffin—being named to the Executive Committee; (2) Atlantic herring specifications involving in an 85% reduction in the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) from 2024 resulting in the lowest ACL in the history of the FMP; (3) actions to incorporate four new stock units for codfish and the

initiation of the transition plan to implement these new stock units in the management program; (4) development of groundfish specifications for cod, haddock, plaice, witch flounder, pollock, halibut and yellowtail flounder and concerns regarding the low cod ACLs; (5) declines in sea scallop abundance in Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic and the development of a management framework to address access areas, trip limits, seasons, and recruitment closures; and (6) an update on monkfish management and research set aside projects.

Interstate Fisheries Management Update. DMF briefed the MFAC on happenings at the recent October 2024 meeting of the ASMFC. This included a discussion of final actions to: (1) approve Addendum XXXI to the American Lobster FMP (see above); (2) set Atlantic herring specifications for 2025 – 2027 and the 2025 seasonal allocation for Management Area 1A—Inshore Gulf of Maine; (3) revise the 2024 spiny dogfish quota to account for a 2023 ACL overage; (4) reapprove several states’ Shad and River Herring Sustainable Fishery Management Plans, including Massachusetts’ shad plan that allows limited recreational harvest; and (5) approve a joint interstate-federal management action on the Summer Flounder FMP to expand the Small Mesh Exemption Program area, broaden the Flynet Exemption gear definition, and modernize the annual monitoring approaches for these mesh size exemptions. The ASMFC also finalized draft addenda for public hearing this winter, including a joint interstate-federal action to address the setting of recreational fishing measures for black sea bass, scup, summer flounder, and bluefish, and an addendum to complement federal action to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch in the gillnet fisheries for spiny dogfish.

Lastly, DMF presented on the recent striped bass stock assessment update and responsive management actions. The assessment indicates the stock remains overfished but was not experiencing overfishing in 2023. Projections vary based on assumptions, but under the “most likely” scenario there is a 43% chance of rebuilding the stock by 2029. Because this is less than a 50% probability, the FMP allows the ASMFC to revise measures on an expedited basis to achieve this probability of rebuilding. Of specific concern is that, while 2024 harvest appears to be low enough, this may be driven by a year class effect and harvest may increase in 2025 as the sizable 2018-year class matures into the slot limit. The Striped Bass Board scheduled a meeting in December to consider management changes for 2025, and in the interim, tasked the technical committee with several analyses to inform management decisions, particularly related to the recreational fishery.

Update on Effort to Modernize Management of Surf Clam Dredge Fishery. DMF met with the Town of Provincetown and surf clam industry members to discuss the agency’s initiative to modernize the surf clam management program using cellular vessel tracking technology and geofencing. DMF’s goal is to revise the spatial management program for this fishery to move away from contour line management to a fixed series of points that can create a geofence, provide access to the resource, protect critical inshore habitat (e.g., eelgrass), and address local concerns and user group conflicts.

Upcoming Meetings. The next MFAC meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2024. It will be held virtually via Zoom.