



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC)

FROM: Daniel J. McKiernan, Director

DATE: August 15, 2022

SUBJECT: **Amended Recreational Tautog Trophy Fish**

Overview

I plan to take to public hearing a proposal to establish a recreational slot limit for tautog with a trophy fish allowance. This would maintain the current 16" minimum size and establish that an angler may only allowed to retain one tautog per day that exceeds 21" total length.

Background

Tautog is managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Given the life history of the animal, the FMP manages the resource based on discrete geo-political regions, with Massachusetts and Rhode Island comprising a single management region (MARI). Accordingly, Rhode Island DEM and Massachusetts DMF work cooperatively to develop and implement compatible management programs across the state jurisdictions. Aiming to achieve a single set of rules across jurisdictions enhances compliance and enforcement and optimizes conservation.

Last year, Rhode Island DEM received a petition from its recreational fishery to adopt a maximum size for the recreational harvest of tautog but allow anglers to retain one trophy fish (>21") per angler per day. For 2022, Rhode Island established a new regulation adopting this trophy fish rule.

My colleagues in Rhode Island consulted me on their implementation of this slot limit and trophy fish allowance. While the timing last year did not allow for DMF to consider a complementary measure for this year, I am interested in considering it now for next year. I view the proposal as having two potential benefits to Massachusetts. First, it will prevent anglers from entering Massachusetts jurisdiction to retain larger fish that are non-compliant with Rhode Island regulations. Second, it will provide some additional conservation by requiring larger mature fish be released alive, while still allowing anglers to retain one large fish should they catch multiples.