



## MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission September 13, 2022 Meeting Summary

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This document serves as a brief summary of the September 13, 2022 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 a recording of the full meeting is posted to [DMF's YouTube channel](#).

### Action Items

*Recreational Cod and Haddock Limits.* The MFAC approved DMF's recommendation to adopt the recreational cod and haddock limits previously enacted on an emergency basis and described in the bullets below. These limits are identical to the recently enacted federal limits. This action will allow anglers fishing in federal waters, where effort predominately occurs, to possess and land lawfully retained catch in Massachusetts. Additionally, it will ensure the state's rules do not undermine federal conservation and management objectives and allow for more simple enforcement and compliance.

- Georges Bank Cod. Open season of August 1 – April 30 with a 22" minimum size and 28" maximum size and 5-fish per angler bag limit.
- Gulf of Maine Cod. Open season of September 1 – October 7 and April 1 – April 14 with a 22" minimum size and a 1-fish per angler bag limit.
- Gulf of Maine Haddock. Open season of April 1 – February 28 with a 17" minimum size and 20-fish per angler bag limit.

*In-Season Adjustment to the 2022 Commercial Summer Flounder Limits.* The MFAC unanimously approved DMF's recommendation to increase the commercial summer flounder trip limits for the period of October 1 – December 31 from 3,000 pounds to 10,000 pounds. This is an in-season adjustment that will apply only to this calendar year. The 10,000-pound trip limit is comparable in scale to what we expect to be adopted in states to our south and west should they have an abundance of unutilized quota. DMF anticipates the benefits of this action will be principally experienced by the offshore fishing fleet. The approved limit will encourage properly permitted vessels fishing in federal waters off the northeast coast to target summer flounder and land this fish in Massachusetts, rather than bypassing the Commonwealth and steaming to other states to take advantage of their high trip limits. DMF does not expect this will result in increased fishing effort in state waters given the time-of-year and the seasonal migration of this species.

### Discussion Items

*Quota Managed Species Update.* DMF reviewed the status of its quota managed fisheries in 2022. This compared landings and quota utilization rates in 2022 to recent years to help demonstrate fishery performance. DMF's presentation focused on bluefish, summer flounder, black sea bass, and horseshoe crabs.

*Fall Industry Stakeholder Meetings.* DMF reminded the MFAC that they were hosting an informal menhaden industry meeting on Wednesday, September 13 at the Annisquam River Field Station in Gloucester immediately following the ASMFC's public hearing on Addendum I to the Menhaden FMP. DMF was also continuing to meet with a variety of horseshoe crab interests to discuss emerging issues related to biomedical and bait demand. DMF also anticipated holding an informal industry meeting later this fall with summer flounder fishing interests to discuss quota management and utilization. These meetings will help lay the foundation for potential regulatory adjustments for the 2022 season.

*Amendment 23 and Maximum Retention of Groundfish.* The NEFMC recently approved Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multi-Species Groundfish FMP. This amendment has a provision that will allow certain vessels operating in a sector to be exempt from minimum size standards to maximize the retention of groundfish caught. This will formalize a program that has been occurring in recent years on a pilot basis through a partnership between NOAA Fisheries, state fisheries agencies, the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, and certain federal groundfish vessels. DMF has drafted regulatory amendments to its multi-species groundfish regulations designed to accommodate this activity.

*MFAC Sub-Committees.* DMF intends to convene the Permitting and Law Enforcement Sub-Committees. The Permitting Sub-Committee will likely meet virtually in mid-to-late October and the Law Enforcement Sub-Committee will likely meet in late-October or early-November.

#### **Presentation**

DMF staff provided a presentation to the MFAC on river herring and the potential that municipal management authorities may move to open the Herring River (Harwich) and the Nemasket River (Middleborough and Lakeville).

#### **Upcoming Meetings**

The next MFAC business meeting is scheduled for October 18, 2022 at a location to be determined.