



## MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission September 22, 2021 Meeting Summary

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This document serves as a brief summary of the September 22, 2021 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This business meeting was held virtually. All meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#). The full meeting can be viewed on [DMF's YouTube channel](#).

### **Action Items**

In-Season Adjustments to the 2021 Commercial Summer Flounder Limits. By a vote of 6-1, the MFAC voted to approve three changes to the 2021 commercial summer flounder limits. First, effective September 26, Fridays and Saturdays were eliminated as closed fishing days. Second, on September 26, the trip limit is increased to 800 pounds for all gear types; the current trip limit is 250 pounds for hook and line and 400 pounds for trawlers. Lastly, on October 10, the trip limit is increased to 2,000 pounds for all gear types.

Winter II Scup Limits. The MFAC voted unanimously to adopt a 21,000-pound commercial scup trip limit for the Winter II period of October 1 – December 31. This 21,000-pound limit will match the expected federal limit for this quota period.

### **Items for Future Public Hearing**

Commercial Lobster Trap Tag Installation Date. For 2022, DMF is proposing to eliminate LCMA-specific lobster trap tag installation dates and instead adopt May 1 as the date by which all traps set in Commonwealth waters must bear a current year trap tag. This will make it so when gear is set after the seasonal trap gear closure, the gear will be marked with a current gear trap tag.

Permitting Clarification. For 2022, DMF is proposing to clarify those permitting regulations affecting the seasonal lobster permit. This would match statutory language that establish this permit as "resident only" and eliminate the non-resident permit fee. DMF also intends to correct omissions and errors in the permit fee regulations dating back to 2014.

Buoy Line Marking Adjustment. For 2022, DMF is proposing to slightly modify its current buoy line marking regulations affecting that subset of lobster permit holders who hold both state and federal lobster permits on the same vessel. To avoid the potential misattribution of gear to state or federal waters, DMF is proposing to prohibit gear set in state waters from having marks that are required in another jurisdiction (e.g., other states and federal waters) and requiring all state required buoy line red marks be accompanied by a green mark when the gear is moved to federal waters.

## **Discussion Items**

Quota Managed Species Update. DMF provided the MFAC with an update on commercial fisheries quota utilization so far in 2021. This discussion focused on black sea bass, summer flounder, striped bass, scup, horseshoe crabs, tautog, and spiny dogfish.

Update Regarding Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP). DMF staff reviewed the recently enacted ALWTRP rule affecting the lobster and Jonah crab trap fishery. This included NOAA's spatial expansion of the February 1 – April 30 Massachusetts North Restricted Area; establishment of the February 1 – April 30 South Island Restricted Area; adoption of DMF's weak rope regulations for state waters; and ropeless gear experimental exemptions to time area closures. DMF discussed state and federal efforts to provide outreach on this final rule. Then DMF discussed pending gear marking rules to go into effect in 2022 and DMF efforts to work with industry to develop best practices.

State Waters Groundfish. DMF and the MFAC Sub-Committee on State Waters Groundfish met on Friday, September 17 to discuss a number of potential proposals that may impact the state waters fishery. This included an expansion of the existing January 1 – May 15 gillnet closure into MA Bay and around Cape Cod to protect right whales and an April 15 – April 30 spawning cod closure in MA Bay to protect known spawning aggregations. In considering these changes, there were also discussions about potential proposals to increase access to the federally allocated state waters groundfish quota sub-components. Such proposals may include adjusting time/area or gear closures during outside of periods designed to conserve spawning fish and protected species and trip limit adjustments.

Recent Adjudicatory Hearing Outcomes. DMF reviewed the outcomes of several recently concluded adjudicatory proceedings.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

The MFAC will meeting again on October 28, 2021. Information regarding the meeting will be published on the [MFAC's website](#).

If you would like to obtain any materials regarding past or upcoming MFAC business meetings, please contact Jared Silva at DMF (617-634-9573 or [jared.silva@mass.gov](mailto:jared.silva@mass.gov)).