



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

September 24, 2020 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the September 24, 2020 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This MFAC 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 page](#).

Action Items

DMF recommended that the MFAC vote to adopt a 24,000 pound commercial scup possession and landing limit for the Winter II (October 1 – December 31) period fishery. This is consistent with the possession limit set by NOAA Fisheries. DMF explained that this would likely not result in increased fishing effort in state-waters due to longstanding mobile gear fishing restrictions and diminished seasonal abundance of scup. However, it would allow vessels fishing in the federal zone to land their catch in Massachusetts ports. The MFAC unanimously approved this recommendation.

Future Rule Making

The MFAC then reviewed and discussed several proposals by DMF to amend regulations for 2021. These proposals will proceed to public hearing over this winter.

- To address the capture of diamondback terrapins in blue crab traps, DMF is proposing to either prohibit trap fishing in estuaries or require all traps set in these areas be configured with a turtle excluder device.
- DMF proposed setting recreational Gulf of Maine cod and haddock limits for April 2021 to complement the recently approved federal rules. This will allow recreational fishermen to retain one-cod per angler measuring at least 21" during an April 1 – April 14 season. Additionally, it will extend the season when recreational anglers can retain 15-haddock per angler measuring at least 17" to include the entirety of April.
- DMF proposed adopting a minimum ghost panel size of three-inches by six-inches for black sea bass pots. This action is necessary to ensure state regulations comply with the interstate fishery management plan.
- To address public health related concerns, DMF proposed formally restricting the use of its retail boat permit to prohibit the sale of histamine producing species. There was some confusion regarding this measure and the MFAC requested DMF provide additional information on it at the October meeting.

Discussion Items

DMF staff reviewed ongoing shellfish related management issues. There are new NSSP mandates regarding pollution assessment and shellfish growing area classification requirements for waterbodies featuring mooring areas. This may limit shellfish harvest activity in affected areas and DMF has established a working group to address resulting issues. There are also new federal requirements

affecting the classification of shellfish growing areas around wastewater treatment plans, which will require DMF to conduct additional studies, audit operations, and document those activities which may result in shellfish growing area reclassification. The MA Shellfish Initiative was in the process of completing several preliminary reports. Earlier this year, the Scoping Committee submitted its report to the Steering Committee and Task Force, and the Assessment Committee was on schedule to submit its report later this fall. These reports were expected to provide the foundation for a Strategic Plan. Lastly, FDA and the EU were in the process of finalizing an agreement that would allow raw molluscan shellfish to be imported in to the EU for the first time since 2010. Initially, firms from MA and WA will be able to access the EU market.

DMF then provided the MFAC with an update on the CARES Act Fisheries Relief Program. MA's programs were well ahead of the schedule when compared to other coastal states. Aid payments were made to for-hire sector applicants. DMF was in the process of wrapping up the application programs for the aquaculture and seafood processing sector with payments expected to be made by the end of September. The commercial sector's application period was ongoing was expected to conclude in mid-October with payments anticipated for late-October.

DMF and the MFAC discussed a potential new policy to allow the transfer of limited entry black sea bass and summer flounder permit endorsements for rod and reel fishermen. DMF will present a more detailed policy proposal to the MFAC at an upcoming meeting, which will include guidance on actively fished criteria and permit bundling.

Discussions regarding the formation of MFAC sub-committees to address law enforcement, permitting, and the commercial striped bass fishery were postponed until the October meeting.

Upcoming Meetings

The next MFAC business meeting is scheduled for October 29, 2020. The meeting will be held virtually via Zoom. 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 (617-626-1534 or jared.silva@state.ma.us).