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**Notice of Public Hearing and Comment Period:
Commercial Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog Dredge Fishery Management Regulations**

Under the provisions of G.L. c. 30A, and pursuant to the authorities found at G.L. c. 130, §§ 17A, 21, 52, and 80 the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is taking public comment on a series of draft regulations at 322 CMR 4.00, 6.00, and 7.00 to modernize the management of the commercial surf clam and ocean quahog dredge fishery. A summary of the proposals is enumerated below. The full text of the regulations and other relevant documents may be found on [DMF's proposed regulations webpage](#).

1. Spatial Management (322 CMR 6.08). The following spatial management regulations will apply to all vessels using dredge gear to harvest surf clams and ocean quahogs:
 - a. Eliminate the seasonal contour line closures. Replace these closures with mapped and published polygons defined by GPS coordinates. These new closures approximate the 12' contour line but also include a 200' buffer around all eelgrass beds mapped by the Department of Environmental Protection and are inclusive of existing management closures and exemption areas. In areas where there is limited surf clam resource (e.g., Buzzards Bay) the shape of the polygon is simplified by drawing straight lines that may extend beyond the 12' contour.
 - b. Maintain the existing closure north of Point Allerton in Hull.
 - c. Maintain existing May 15 – October 15 closure off Manomet in southwestern Cape Cod Bay to prevent user group conflicts and protect new shell lobsters and extend this closure eastward along southern Cape Cod Bay from Sandwich to Dennis.
 - d. Close the waters within Herring Cove from Race Point to Wood End seasonally from May 15 – October 15.
 - e. Establish a process to adjust closure boundaries to address user group conflicts; protect, restore, and sustain critical benthic habitats; and investigate and open additional areas to dredge fishing.
2. Electronic Vessel Tracking (322 CMR 6.08 and 7.11). Mandate that by January 1, 2027, all vessels fishing with dredge gear for surf clams and ocean quahogs shall install and maintain operable electronic tracking devices onboard their vessels. DMF may issue authorizations to temporarily power down these tracking devices to address discrete issues related to device failure, vessel haul-out, and other similar technological issues with the device.

3. Night Closure (322 CMR 4.06 and 6.08). Exempt surf clam and ocean quahog dredge vessels from the mobile gear night closure from February 1 through April 30 annually. This shall not apply to the contaminated bait fishery.
4. Housekeeping (322 CMR 6.08). Enhance, clarify, and streamline regulatory language relevant to permitting requirements; catch restrictions; bycatch of municipally managed species; and the contaminated bait fishery. These adjustments do not modify existing requirements.

DMF will accept written public comment through 5PM on Friday, June 12, 2026. Please submit written comments by email to marine.fish@mass.gov to the attention of Director McKiernan. DMF will also host a virtual public hearing on Tuesday, June 2, 2026 at 6PM. To attend this virtual public hearing, please register [here](#).