



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Marine Fisheries
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January 30, 2026

Notice of Public Hearing and Comment Period:

Commercial Summer Flounder, Black Sea Bass, and Scup Limits; Commercial Horseshoe Crab Quotas; Commercial Sea Scallop Dredge Gear; Recreational Bluefish Limits; and Permitting

Under the provisions of G.L. c. 30A, and pursuant to the authorities found at G.L. c. 130, §§ 2, 17A, 21, 38B, and 80, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is taking public comment on a series of proposed regulatory amendments at 322 CMR 4.00, 6.00, and 7.00. The draft regulations outlined below affect the management of commercial fisheries for summer flounder, black sea bass, scup, horseshoe crab, and sea scallop; commercial fisheries permitting; and recreational bluefish limits. Full text of the regulations may be found on [DMF's website](#) along with additional background information.

Schedule for Public Comment Period and Hearing

DMF will accept written public comment through Friday, February 27, 2026. Please submit written comments to the attention of Director Daniel McKiernan by email to marine.fish@mass.gov. DMF will also host an in-person public hearing on Tuesday, February 24, 2026 from 6 – 9PM at Admiral's Hall located at 101 Academy Drive in Buzzards Bay, MA on the campus of Massachusetts Maritime Academy. If you cannot attend the in-person hearing there will be a listen-in-only option via Zoom ([register here](#)).

Proposed Regulatory Amendments

1. Sea Scallop Dredge Width (322 CMR 4.13). To create uniform regulations across jurisdictions, DMF proposes to modify the state's maximum sea scallop dredge width from 10 feet to 10.5 feet to align with federal small-dredge requirements.
2. Recreational Bluefish Limits (322 CMR 6.19). In response to coastwide liberalizations to the recreational bluefish limits, DMF proposes to increase the daily bag limit from 3 fish to 5 fish for anglers fishing from shore or a private/rental vessel and from 5 fish to 7 fish for anglers fishing from a charter or party boat.
3. Commercial Summer Flounder Limits (322 CMR 6.22). In response to an increase in the state's commercial summer flounder quota for 2026 and 2027, DMF proposes to:
 - a. Establish a quota-based trigger for the Period I (January 1–April 22) and Period II (April 23–December 31) quota allocations whereby Period I receives 30% of the annual quota

- when it exceeds 750,000 pounds and 15% of the annual quota when it does not. The Period II fishery receives the remainder plus any underage from Period I.
- b. Establish a quota-based trigger for the Period I trip limit whereby the trip limit is 5,000 pounds for all authorized gears when the annual quota exceeds 750,000 pounds and 2,000 pounds when it does not.
 - c. Increase the Period II summertime (April 23–September 30) trip limit from 500 pounds to 600 pounds for net fishers and 325 pounds to 400 pounds for hook fishers.
 - d. Eliminate Saturday as a closed fishing day during the Period II summertime fishery thereby allowing commercial fishing seven days per week.
 - e. Modify the quota-based trigger for the Period II fall (October 1–December 31) trip limit whereby the trip limit is 3,500 pounds, rather than 5,000 pounds, if at least 10% of the annual quota remains on October 1.
4. Commercial Scup Limits (322 CMR 6.27). In response to recent fishery performance, DMF proposes to liberalize the commercial scup limits during June to:
 - a. Increase the daily trip limit for directed hook and line and pot gear from 400 pounds to 800 pounds.
 - b. Add Monday and Thursday as open fishing days thereby allowing commercial fishing Sunday through Thursday.
 5. Commercial Black Sea Bass Limits (322 CMR 6.28). In response to an increase in the state's commercial black sea bass quota for 2026 and 2027, DMF proposes to:
 - a. Amend the in-season date where closed fishing days are automatically eliminated for directed hook and line and pot gear from September 15 to September 1.
 - b. Amend the in-season date where trip limits for directed hook and line and pot gear may be automatically increased based on quota availability from September 15 to September 1.
 - c. Eliminate the April 1 – April 22 closure period for trawlers thereby allowing them to land an incidental catch of up to 100 pounds year-round or until the quota is taken.
 6. Commercial Horseshoe Crab Quotas (322 CMR 6.34). In response to changing demand for horseshoe crabs, DMF proposes to:
 - a. Reduce the annual horseshoe crab bait quota by 40,000 crabs thereby moving it from 140,000 crabs to 100,000 crabs.
 - b. Reallocate these 40,000 crabs to the biomedical quota at a 1:2 ratio thereby increasing the annual biomedical quota from 200,000 crabs to 280,000 crabs.
 7. Housekeeping Affecting Regulated Fishery Permit Endorsements (322 CMR 7.01). To reduce the complexity of the commercial fisheries permitting system, DMF proposes to:
 - a. Eliminate the Sea Scallop Shucking Endorsement. Any vessel lawfully authorized to possess and land sea scallops will be allowed to land shucked product. A Shellfish Endorsement will remain necessary to land whole in-shell product from areas open to the harvest of shellfish shellstock.
 - b. Eliminate the sub-endorsements to the Coastal Access Permit for Squid, Whiting, Sea Herring, and Northshore Mobile Gear. The activities authorized by these sub-endorsements will instead be covered by the Coastal Access Permit.
 8. Modifications to Offshore and Coastal Lobster Permit Rules (322 CMR 7.03 and 7.06). In response to industry requests, DMF proposes to allow any existing Coastal Lobster Permit

holder whose corresponding vessel holds a federal lobster trap permit to permanently surrender their Coastal Lobster Permit to DMF in exchange for an Offshore Lobster Permit thus permanently converting their trap fishery authorization from dual state-federal to federal only.