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*Director*

# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

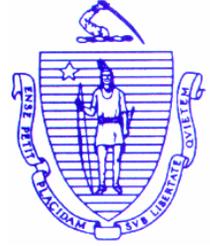
## Division of Marine Fisheries

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**November 8, 2006**

### **Marine Fisheries Advisory**

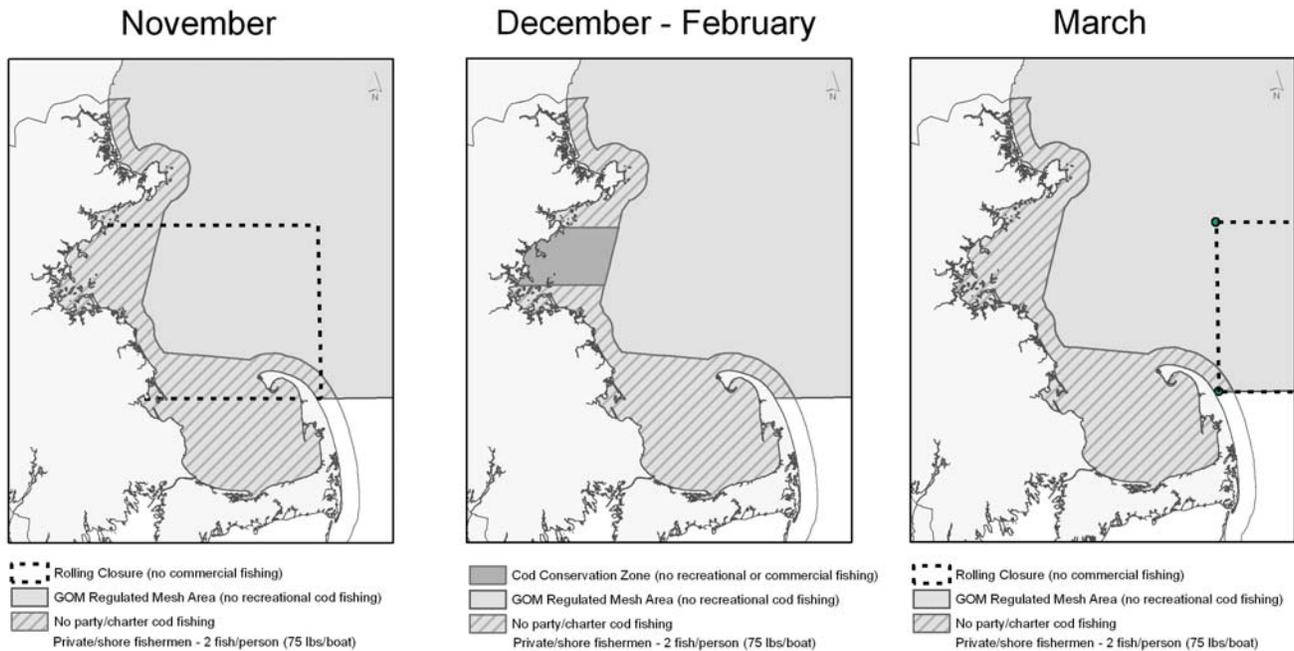
#### **Clarification on Fall/Winter Cod Restrictions Affecting Recreational and Commercial Fishing in MA Waters of the Gulf of Maine (north of Cape Cod)**

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The Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) has received several calls requesting clarification on the various cod closures affecting commercial and recreational fishermen fishing in Gulf of Maine waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth. This notice seeks to clarify the rules as to where and when fishermen may fish during November through March.

The rules have become increasingly complex due to the layering of various state and federal rules in southern Gulf of Maine, notably in Massachusetts Bay where the state/federal commercial "Rolling Closures" remain in effect as well as the recently enacted (2005) MA Bay Cod Conservation Zone (CCZ) where recreational and commercial harvest is prohibited. Most recently, for recreational fishermen, a five month (November through March) federal cod closure was enacted in all of the Gulf of Maine, but *Marine Fisheries* has decided to preserve access for private vessels and shore-based fishermen in state waters of the Gulf of Maine (northwest of latitude 42° and Cape Cod Bay) with a 2-fish cod limit.

Below are monthly maps for the period November – March depicting applicable closures to recreational and commercial harvest of cod in Gulf of Maine waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth. Further information on each closure is also provided below. Note that additional restrictions may apply in federal waters of the Gulf of Maine and separate state/federal rules apply to the southern New England/Georges Bank area. Visit the *Marine Fisheries* website at [www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries) for further details on state cod regulations (322 CMR 6.03, 8.12, & 8.15) and the NOAA Fisheries website at [www.nero.noaa.gov/nero](http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero) for further information on federal cod regulations (50 CFR §648 Subpart F).



**Seasonal Prohibitions on Commercial Fishing for Groundfish:**

October – November Rolling Closure: Commercial fishermen (state or federally permitted) may not fish for or possess cod or any other regulated groundfish species in the Cape Cod Bay and Massachusetts Bay Closure from Plymouth North to Marblehead, defined as an area within the waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth north of latitude 42° and south of 42° 30'.

March Rolling Closure: Federally-permitted fishing vessels may not fish for cod or any other regulated groundfish species, unless otherwise allowed in 50 CFR 648.81(f), in Rolling Closure Area I, which includes waters northeast of Cape Cod (all waters bounded on the west by longitude 68°30', east by longitude 70°, south by latitude 42° and north by latitude 42°30)

**Cod Conservation Zone Prohibitions on Commercial and Recreational Fishing for Cod:**

December – January 15 CCZ\*: No person shall harvest cod from waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth north of latitude 42° 20' and south of 42° 30'. With the exception of lobster traps and drags for scallops and sea urchins, it will also be unlawful for any person to fish, set, or abandon any gear capable of harvesting cod in this CCZ during the restricted season. This prohibition applies to all gillnets, otter trawls, mid-water trawls, seines, and all hook-and-line gears including longlines, rod-and-reel, and handlines.

\*This closure may be extended through February 28.

**Restrictions on Recreational Fishing for Cod:**

November – March\*: For-hire vessels are prohibited from landing or possessing any cod from waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth north of latitude 42° and in all waters of Cape Cod Bay. \*Note this specific closure to fishing for cod by for-hire vessels supports the federal prohibition for the for-hire fishery in the greater Gulf of Maine Regulated Mesh Area (GOM RMA) and overlaps with the shorter state CCZ closure in a portion of Massachusetts Bay.

Recreational anglers fishing from shore or aboard private vessels are prohibited from possessing more than two cod per person per day, not to exceed 75-lbs. per vessel. This rule is more liberal than the federal counterpart where all recreational fishermen are prohibited from possessing or retaining any cod from the GOM RMA. *Marine Fisheries* and the Massachusetts Marine

Fisheries Advisory Commission determined that a complete prohibition on possession by private anglers during the winter and spring months was not necessary to meet the Gulf of Maine's targeted catch reduction.

Frequently Asked Questions:

*Q1. I fish recreationally aboard a private vessel, can I take cod beyond state waters of the Gulf of Maine during November – March?*

A. No. NOAA Fisheries has prohibited all recreational fishermen (aboard for-hire and private vessels) from possessing or retaining any cod from the Gulf of Maine Regulated Mesh Area (GOM RMA) during November – March.

See <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/nr/nrdoc/06mulfw42fw3rec.pdf> for further information on federal for-hire and recreational cod harvest restrictions in the GOM RMA.

You may fish for cod south and east of Cape Cod, south of latitude 42°; federal restrictions on for-hire and recreational cod harvest in the Georges Bank and Southern New England Regulated Mesh Areas (GB RMA & SNE RMA) have not changed (see [www.nero.noaa.gov](http://www.nero.noaa.gov) for further information on regulations in these RMAs).

*Q2. What's the possession limit for cod aboard a private recreational vessel in state waters of the Gulf of Maine with more than one person fishing recreationally?*

A. During November through March private recreational anglers may possess two fish per person up to a 75-lb. vessel limit (322 CMR 6.03). Therefore the number of fish aboard a private recreational vessel must not exceed twice the number of persons aboard and collectively the cod aboard the vessel must not weigh more than 75-lbs.

During April through October there is a 10 cod per person possession limit.

*Q3. What's my limit for pollock or haddock?*

A. Commercial and recreational fishermen are subject to a 19" minimum size for haddock and pollock. Commercial fishermen and all recreational fishermen are not subject to a possession limit on pollock or haddock. Federally permitted commercial fishermen should consult federal regulations for applicable limits.

*Q4. What's the status of the Cod Conservation Zone (CCZ)?*

A. The Cod Conservation Zone is an area of outer Massachusetts Bay where seasonal aggregations of cod are occurring each winter and were subject to intense harvest. The CCZ remains in place and effective December 1<sup>st</sup> all directed commercial and recreational fishing for cod in that portion of state waters north of latitude 42° 20' and south of latitude 42° 30' will be prohibited. See the previous page for further details about fishing restrictions in place during the CCZ closure. Note that in 2005 the CCZ was extended through February 28<sup>th</sup>, and a similar extension in 2007 is possible pending analysis of last year's landings.

For more information contact Melanie Griffin at 617.626.1528.