



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

August 24, 2017 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the August 24, 2017 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. It provides only an overview of the items discussed. Further discussion of each item is captured in MFAC business meeting minutes for this date.

Action Items

2017 Recreational Gulf of Maine Cod and Haddock Limits. The MFAC unanimously approved the 2017 recreational fishing limits for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock. DMF set these limits on an emergency basis in July 2017. This action codifies these limits on a permanent basis for the remainder of the fishing year. The limits are described in the table below:

2017 Recreational Fishing Limits for Gulf of Maine Cod and Haddock

| Species | Mode | Open Season | Closed Season | Bag Limit | Minimum Size |
|---------|----------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Cod | Private Angler | Jan 1 – Dec 31 | Open Year Round | 1-fish | 19" |
| | For-Hire | Closed Year Round | Jan 1 – Dec 31 | 0-fish | N/A |
| Haddock | Private Angler | Jan 1 – Dec 31 | Open Year Round | 17" | 17" |
| | For-Hire | Jan 1 – Feb 28 Apr 15 – Sept 16 Nov 1 – Dec 31 | Mar 1 – Apr 14 Sept 17 – Oct 31 | 12-fish | 17" |

Surf Clam Dredge Closure off Ellisville. The MFAC approved enacting a temporary closure through October 31 to prevent surf clam dredge vessels from fishing in a nearshore area off Elllisville Beach and the Cape Cod Canal. The closed area is bounded by a line beginning at Manomet Point thence heading due east along 41°55' latitude for 2.5 miles to where it intersects with 70°29' longitude, thence due south to where it intersects with the shoreline in the Town of Sandwich. This closure was prompted by unresolved gear conflicts between a small number of surf clam dredge boats and commercial lobster fishermen. DMF will meet with stakeholders this fall to seek a permanent resolution.

Presentations

The MFAC received a presentation from Wendy Mainardi, DMF's Seafood Marketing Program Coordinator. The presentation focused on the work being done to improve seafood marketing in Massachusetts through small grants issued by DMF.

Items for Future Public Hearing

Timing of Commercial Scup Management Periods. To better utilize the available coast-wide commercial scup quota, the ASMFC and MAFMC are adjusting the scup fishery management plan so that beginning in 2018 the federally managed Winter II period will include the month of October. Currently the Winter II period is just November and December. The addition of this month will allow for scup to be harvested by a larger number of vessels at higher trip limits.

Discussion Items

DMF reviewed the recent ASMFC and MAFMC meetings. The comments focused on expectations for the 2018 black sea bass, scup, fluke and bluefish fisheries. DMF also provided updates on the interstate management of tautog, menhaden and lobster. The ASMFC was in the process of approving Amendment 1 to the Tautog Fishery Management Plan, which would require the implementation of the commercial tautog tagging program and new recreational tautog management measures in 2018. Draft Amendment 3 to the Menhaden Fishery Management Plan was approved to go out to public hearing. This amendment may modify the state-by-state commercial quota shares and how the coast-wide quota specification is set. The Lobster Board decided to take no action to increase egg production for the Southern New England lobster stock, but is reviewing potential options to create more consistent rules across the Lobster Management Areas for the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank stock.

DMF was intending to modernize the regulatory language affecting mobile gear closure boundaries. A strawman proposal was drafted and mapped. The agency intended to hold two industry meetings this fall to discuss the proposed boundaries and take comment on potential modifications. The MFAC supported this initiative.

DMF described commercial menhaden management and the use of carrier vessels. DMF will discuss the continued use of carrier vessels with industry prior to the 2018 season.

DMF initiated a pilot program that allows draggers utilizing modified gear to reduce finfish bycatch to target horseshoe crabs at quantities that exceed the existing trip limit. The purpose of this program is to increase the crabs available to the biomedical industry for LAL extraction and examine the feasibility of a biomedical horseshoe crab trawl fishery. At present only one vessel was participating in this fishery. The MFAC supported this program and suggested that DMF be flexible with the standards for what constituted modified gear.

In July 2017, DMF met with whelk potters on Martha's Vineyard to hear and address their concerns regarding loss of harvest resulting from the change in the gauging technique and the resulting minimum size increase. In advance of this meeting, DMF sent sea samplers to work with island fishermen. After a review of the data, DMF found that loss of harvest was consistent with expectations (and that experienced by mainland fishermen) and it was not as high as some Vineyard fishermen had claimed.

Future Meetings

The next MFAC business meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 3, 2017. Subsequent meetings will be held on Thursday, November 2, 2017 and Thursday, December 14, 2017. Meetings will be held at the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Westborough Field Headquarters and they begin at 10:30 AM.

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).