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New Regulations Affecting Recreational V-Notch Standards, American Eel Limits and Other Changes

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Recreational V-Notch Standard

Marine Fisheries has adopted a state-wide recreational v-notch lobster standard of 1/8 inch with or without setal hairs. Previously, the recreational v-notch standards varied based on the geographic area where the lobster was taken from. As recreational lobster fishermen may fish in all waters of the Commonwealth, the state-wide standard is preferred as it will improve compliance with and the enforcement of recreational v-notch standards. Additionally, a single state-wide standard will help *Marine Fisheries* enhance education and outreach regarding the importance of v-notching and how this practice has improved lobster spawning stock biomass.



American Eels

Marine Fisheries has made a series of adjustments to its eel fishery rules. The recreational and commercial minimum size for eels has been increased from 6 inches to 9 inches; the recreational possession limit has been reduced from 50 eels to 25 eels, with an exception for for-hire vessels which may continue to possess 50 eels; the use of fyke nets between September 1 and December 31 is prohibited; and the use of eels pots with a wire mesh smaller than 1/2 inch by 1/2 inch has also been prohibited. The most recent Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission stock assessment for American eels indicated that the eel stock was depleted and recommended reducing fishing mortality at all life stages. These actions are designed to improve the stock status and to be consistent with ASMFC eel management measures.

Asian Horseshoe Crabs

Marine Fisheries has prohibited the possession and distribution of three species of Asian horseshoe crabs that may be imported into the Commonwealth for use as bait. These three species are: *Carcinoscorpius rotundicauda*, *Tachypleus gigas* and *Trachypleus tridentatus*. This prohibition was designed to prevent the introduction of invasive parasites and pathogens, as well as a potential bio-accumulated neurotoxin. These agents could negatively affect marine ecology and human health. This action was taken in support of a resolution by the interstate management board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Hammerhead Sharks

Marine Fisheries has increased the minimum size for all hammerhead shark species from 54 inches to 78 inches. The most recent stock assessment indicated that female scalloped hammerhead sharks did not reach sexual maturity until they were at least 78 inches. Accordingly, this action is being taken to improve the spawning stock biomass for these species. As hammerhead sharks species are difficult to differentiate once eviscerated, this rule applies to all hammerhead shark species, rather than just the scalloped hammerhead.

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