



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

December 14, 2017 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the December 14, 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

The MFAC approved DMF's recommendation to complement the federal Winter I (January 1 – April 30) commercial scup limit of 50,000 pounds.

Review of Recent ASMFC and MAFMC Management Issues

Division of Marine Fisheries' (DMF) staff reviewed the adoption of Amendment 3 to the ASMFC's Menhaden FMP. This amendment adjusts state-by-state commercial quota shares and increases Massachusetts commercial quota allocation from .84% to 1.27% of the overall quota. It additionally, addressed incidental catch limits, episodic events, quota rollover and transfers, and the Chesapeake Bay cap.

DMF staff then reviewed draft Addendum XXX to ASMFC's Black Sea Bass FMP. This addendum will be used to establish recreational fishing limits for 2018. This addendum was designed to address equity among states and changes in the geographic distribution of fish. This may be accomplished through changing recreational fishing management regions and allocating recreational harvest based on regional biomass or harvest data. Public hearings will be held in January 2018 and DMF expects that the ASMFC will vote to approve a final Addendum at the February meeting.

Lastly, DMF covered a potential draft Amendment to the MAFMC's Fluke FMP. This Amendment is expected to address commercial fishery permitting and quota reallocation. This includes options to adjust quota allocation based on geographic shifts in regional biomass and establish a federally managed wintertime fishery similar to scup. However, its development and implementation are complicated by the fact that the current fluke quota is at a historic low. Accordingly, a third option was included that would require the stock to be rebuilt before quota shares are addressed.

Future Public Hearing Items

DMF reviewed its proposal to move forward an omnibus shellfish regulatory proposal. This would codify longstanding shellfish growing area classification information, shellfish harvest and handling requirements and aquaculture permit conditions as regulation. This is being done to make shellfish fishing information more available to the public. Additionally, it will establish regulations regarding the shellfish relay program and municipal fees, in response to recent legislation. This legislation allows the municipalities where shellfish is relayed from to charge a fee to the municipalities receiving the shellfish.

DMF also discussed its proposal to amend fishing limits for 2018. This includes proposals to establish: (1) new recreational tautog fishing limits (described at past meetings); (2) adjust the number and sequencing of open fishing days in the summertime commercial black sea bass fishery and increase the commercial trip limits if the number of open fishing days is reduced; (3) allow a nominal retention of

black sea bass bycatch in the small mesh trawl squid fishery; (4) close the commercial striped bass fishery from July 3 – July 5 and on Labor Day to prevent user group conflicts on holiday weekends; (5) adopt a 2” bar spacing requirement on surf clam dredges to potentially improve size selectivity to improve minimum size compliance; (6) establish a 200 pound scup bycatch limit in small mesh trawl fisheries to comply with federal and interstate FMPs; (7) move October from the summertime commercial scup fishery period to the Winter II period; and (8) explicitly prohibit the use of bleach in harvesting clams.

Discussion Items

Four additional issues were discussed at the December meeting. First, Director Pierce reviewed his recent decisions to discontinue the wintertime fluke weekly aggregate limit pilot program and to not accommodate commercial fluke fishermen to possess multiple state limits when landing in Massachusetts during the winter fishery. DMF staff then discussed its ongoing review of mobile gear closure boundaries. DMF advised the MFAC there would be a surf clam dredge management meeting at the new SMAST facility on January 8, 2018. Lastly, MFAC member Michael Pierdinock provided an overview of the recent meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

Upcoming Meetings

The next MFAC business meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 28, 2018. It will be held at the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s Westborough Field Headquarters and will begin at 10:00 AM.

Future 2018 meetings are then scheduled for March 8, April 5, May 10 and June 14; these meeting dates may be subject to change.

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).