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Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

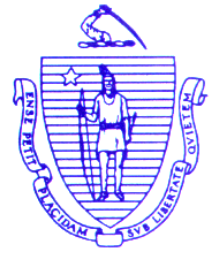
Division of Marine Fisheries

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February 8, 2018

Marine Fisheries Advisory

DIRECTOR SEEKS COMMENTS:

POTENTIAL 2018 GULF OF MAINE COD AND HADDOCK RECREATIONAL LIMITS AND EXISTING ALLOWANCE FOR PRIVATE ANGLERS TO RETAIN A SINGLE GULF OF MAINE COD WHILE FISHING IN STATE-WATERS

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) has made recommendations to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding recreational Gulf of Maine cod and haddock rules for 2018 ([Council press release](#)). This recommendation impacts how DMF may regulate these fisheries inside state-waters, particularly as it relates to our existing regulation [322 CMR 6.03(4)(a)(1)] that allows a private angler fishing in the state-waters portion of the Gulf of Maine (GOM) portion to retain one (1) cod at a 19" minimum size year-round.

Accordingly, DMF is seeking public comment on how to address the recent Council recommendation on 2018 GOM cod and haddock recreational limits. Of specific interest is whether to: (1) eliminate the existing state-waters private anglers 1-fish allowance for GOM cod and retain status quo regulations for GOM haddock, or (2) maintain our private angler allowance for cod and require additional constraints on GOM haddock. Per the Council's recommendation, the latter option would result in a 2-fish reduction in the for-hire bag GOM haddock limit (from 12-fish to 10-fish) and a May GOM haddock closure for private anglers. See Table 1 below for details.

Instructions for Written Comments

Written public comment only will be accepted until 5PM on Friday, February 23, 2018.

Please address all comments to Director Pierce at marine.fish@state.ma.us or

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DMF first adopted a 1-cod limit for private anglers in the state-waters portion of the GOM in 2015, after the catch of GOM cod by all recreational anglers was prohibited in federal waters. DMF did not support the federal year-round closure for private anglers. We concluded zero possession was unprecedented and represented a difficult-to-defend policy, as it prohibited private citizens from accessing a public resource while continuing to allow a commercial fishery to access the same resource.

In subsequent years, DMF has continued to authorize private anglers to retain 1-cod per day at a 19" minimum size year-round. Our 1-cod allowance was not extended to anglers fishing aboard for-hire vessels, as the majority of for-hire vessels are permitted federally and thus bound by the most restrictive rule (i.e., zero possession).

Table 1. NEFMC preferred recommendations for FY2018 GOM Cod and Haddock recreational regulations.

		Preferred (status quo)	Preferred only if MA waters remain open for private anglers for GOM cod (split mode)	
			For-hire	Private
GOM Haddock	Bag Limit	12	10	12
	Min. Size	17"	17"	17"
	Closed Season	Mar. 1 – Apr. 14 Sep. 17 – Oct. 31	Mar. 1 – Apr. 14 Sep. 17 – Oct. 31	Mar. 1 – Apr. 14 May 1 - 31 Sep. 17 – Oct. 31
GOM Cod		Prohibited possession year-round in federal and state waters	Prohibited possession year-round in federal waters	

For more information about the management of recreational cod and haddock fisheries in Massachusetts, contact DMF at 617-626-1520 or visit our website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.