



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

May 10, 2018 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the May 10, 2018 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.

Review of Proposals for Future Public Hearing

2018 Recreational Black Sea Bass Limits

As a result of the ASMFC's approval of DMF's appeal of Addendum XXX, Massachusetts recreational black sea bass season may occur from May 19 – September 12. This is 15-days longer than the season in 2017. The bag limit and minimum size will remain at 5-fish and 15 inches, respectively.

Shellfish Sanitation, Harvest and Handling Rules

DMF has complied with mandates of the NSSP for the sanitary control of shellfish produced and harvested for human consumption through a variety of regulations, policies and permit conditions. These various approaches will be codified into DMF regulation. This is being done to enhance outreach, education, enforcement and compliance.

Mobile Gear Closures

DMF has completed converting its mobile gear closure boundaries into latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates. Maps and boundary descriptions are available on DMF's website. DMF will now proceed to public hearing in the early fall to modernize these boundaries in regulation for 2019.

Discussion Items

May 2018 ASMFC Meeting

DMF staff reviewed various happenings at the recent ASMFC meeting. Comments focused on sea herring, winter flounder, black sea bass, and menhaden. Additionally, issues pertaining to striped bass, fluke and tautog were discussed.

Final Resolution on the Use of Menhaden Carriers in Massachusetts

For 2018, DMF will implement permit conditions that will allow up to two harvester vessels to utilize a single carrier vessel while fishing for menhaden. The use of carrier vessels will be further conditioned to ensure compliance with menhaden possession and landing limits. This allowance will be rescinded once 75% of the state's menhaden quota is landed.

Recent Emergency Regulations to Protect Right Whales

DMF updated the MFAC issues pertaining to right whale protections. In response to aerial surveys showing large numbers of right whales in Cape Cod Bay, DMF implemented a 10 knot speed limit for vessels smaller than 65' and extended the trap gear closure. Both rules were scheduled to be lifted on May 16th, but that could timeline could be shortened or further extended based on the results of forthcoming aerial surveys.

Review of Law Enforcement Sub-Committee Meeting

DMF reviewed a recent MFAC Law Enforcement Sub-Committee Meeting. The sub-committee highlighted several issues they wanted DMF to further review. This included a potential prohibition on gaffing and enforcement across state jurisdictions for jointly managed species.

Upcoming Meetings

The next MFAC business meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 14, 2018. It will be held at DMF's New Bedford Office at SMAST East. This meeting is scheduled to begin immediately following a public hearing at 10AM. The meeting schedule for the second half of 2018 is forthcoming.

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).