



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

June 14, 2018 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the June 14, 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.

Action Items

2018 Recreational Fishing Limits

The MFAC approved the Director’s recommendation to implement the final regulations that establish the 2018 recreational fishing limits for Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank cod, black sea bass, fluke and scup. These final regulations are described in the table below. These final limits do not differ from the previously announced limits that were implemented by emergency regulation.

Fishery	Open Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
Gulf of Maine Cod	Closed Year Round	0-fish (prohibited)	N/A
Georges Bank Cod	Open Year Round	10-fish	23"
Black Sea Bass	May 19 – September 12	5-fish	15"
Fluke	May 23 – October 9	5-fish	17"
Scup, Private	May 1 – December 31	30-fish	9"
Scup, For-Hire	May 1 – June 30 July 1 – December 31	45-fish 30-fish	9"

Presentation

DMF provided the MFAC with a presentation on offshore wind energy development. The presentation focused on offshore wind energy projects from New Jersey to Cape Cod and impacts on fishery related issues.

Discussion Items

Whelk Fishery Update

DMF provided the MFAC with a channeled whelk fishery update. This included a review of the fishery and resource; the recent stock assessment conducted by DMF, which showed that channeled whelk are overfished with overfishing occurring; and the projected minimum harvest size gauge increase schedule and its projected impacts on catch and value.

DMF Proposals Regarding 2019 Scup Specifications

DMF reached out to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council on two issues it sought to have addressed when the Council sets the 2019 specifications. The first issue was to review a proposal for a minimum size tolerance that would allow recreational anglers to retain a small number of undersized scup for bait purposes. DMF proposed the MAFMC review a proposal that would allow a 5-fish per angler tolerance with all fish measuring at least 6". The second issue was to increase the summertime seasonal small mesh trawl bycatch allowance to reduce regulatory discarding in MA and RI’s inshore squid fishery.

Eel Addendum V

A draft comment letter from the MFAC to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission on Eel Addendum V was reviewed. The letter was supported by the MFAC. In summary, the comments addressed proposals affecting both the elver fishery and the yellow eel fishery. With regards to elvers, the MFAC opposed increases in quota and changes the provisions affecting elver aquaculture. On yellow eels, the MFAC supported maintaining the current coast-wide quota cap but favored adjusting the management trigger to require two consecutive years of exceeding the coast-wide quota cap by 10% before triggering state-by-state quota management. Lastly, the MFAC objected to adjusting potential state-by-state quotas that would result in MA's present share being reduced and favored an approach to adjusting state-by-state quotas that used a weighted average factoring in data from a longer historic time series, as well as recent performance.

Overview of Quota Monitoring

DMF provided an overview of how data is collected from fishermen and dealers; how and why the data is used to track quotas; the nuances of each data set and why certain data sets are preferred in certain analysis; and the challenges DMF faces when monitoring the state-waters groundfish fishery landings in real time. DMF also reviewed options for improving the link between catch data and spatial data in the future.

Upcoming Meetings

The next MFAC business meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 19, 2018. It will be held at Division of Fish and Wildlife's Field Headquarters in Westborough, MA. This meeting is scheduled to begin immediately following a public hearing at 9AM.

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).