



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

November 8, 2018 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the November 8, 2018 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. Further details will be captured in MFAC business meeting minutes for this date.

Action Items

Winter II Scup Limits

The MFAC approved the Division of Marine Fisheries recommendation to mirror the federal Winter II (October 1 – December 31) scup possession and landing limit of 28,500 pounds per trip. Due to timing, the 2018 Winter II limits were initially implemented by DMF via permit condition.

Future Public Hearing Items

Schedule for Whelk Gauge Size Increases

The MFAC reviewed DMF’s proposed schedule to biennially increase the size of the whelk gauge (Table 1). Under this schedule, the gauge size would be increased by 1/8” every other year. As a result, the gauge size would increase from 2 7/8” to 3 5/8”, which corresponds to a size where 50% of female whelks are sexually mature.

	2019	2021	2023	2025	2027	2029
Chute Gauge Width	3”	3 1/8”	3 1/4”	3 3/8”	3 1/2”	3 5/8”

New Regulations to Improve Head Boat Compliance

Recent high profile non-compliance incidents among the south coast’s head boats targeting black sea bass and scup have prompted interest in improving angler compliance on these head boats. For 2019, DMF is proposing several new provisions that would apply to the head boat fleet. The potential new requirements include provisions that will require head boats: generate a passenger list; issue bags, containers or stringers to individual anglers; have those bags, containers or stringers labeled in a manner that makes them identifiable to an angler on the passenger list; mandate anglers segregate their catch from other angler’s catch and segregate their catch by species (e.g., scup from black sea bass); restrict crew from fishing under certain circumstances and selling catch to patrons.

Northern Right Whale Conservation Measures

In April 2018, DMF implemented an emergency regulation that enacted a 10-knot speed limit for vessels smaller than 65’ overall length operating in Cape Cod Bay during the latter half of April and early May; a federal rule established a seasonal speed limit on vessels 65’ overall length or larger this time of year in this area. DMF implemented this emergency rule to prevent small vessels from striking right whales as

they aggregate in the Bay to surface feed during the early spring. Shipstrikes are a substantial cause of injury and mortality to this endangered whale.

Changes to Striped Bass Management in 2019

DMF reviewed draft proposals to implement a prohibition on gaffing striped bass, phase in a mandatory circle hook requirements when fishing for striped bass with natural baits, and allow the importation and subsequent sale of striped bass lawfully harvested in other jurisdictions that do not comply to our minimum size when the commercial fishery is open. The MFAC also encouraged DMF to consider taking comment on adjusting the sequencing of the commercial striped bass days (e.g., having an open fishing day on Wednesday rather than Thursday) and adjusting the start date of the commercial fishery (e.g., opening the fishery a week or two earlier).

Discussion Items

Review of October Public Hearings on Mobile Gear

DMF reviewed the comment received at recent public hearings on mobile gear. The comments focused on potential modifications to mobile gear closures boundaries and creating a clear exemption to allow the use of chafing gear on the bottom of cod ends. DMF was currently considering the comments and sought feedback from the MFAC. DMF will be providing the MFAC with a final recommendation on its mobile gear regulatory proposals at the December 2018 business meeting.

Summary of October ASMFC Meeting

DMF reviewed the key aspects of the recent October 2018 ASMFC annual meeting. Discussion was centered around sea herring, dogfish, striped bass and black sea bass.

Upcoming Meetings

The next MFAC business meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 14, 2018. It will be held at Division of Fish and Wildlife's Field Headquarters in Westborough, MA.

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).