



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

October 17, 2019 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the October 17, 2019 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. Further details are available in the supplemental meeting materials and MFAC business meeting minutes.

Action Items

Lobster Processing Regulations

The MFAC unanimously approved the Director's recommendation to adopt the recently filed emergency regulations affecting lobster processing in Massachusetts as final regulations. This action brings DMF's lobster processing regulations into phase with recent amendments to state law at G.L. c. 130 §44 and allows for additional commerce in shell-on added-value products, including the sale and processing of lobster claws and the importation of shell-on lobster parts for processing. Prior to these changes, Massachusetts' only allowed the processing and sale of frozen shell-on lobster tails weighing three ounces or more.

Winter II Scup Limits

The MFAC unanimously approved the Director's recommendation to adopt a 27,000 pound possession and landing during the 2019 Winter II (October 1 – December 31) scup fishery. The Winter II fishery is a federally managed fishery and this state limit is commensurate with NOAA Fisheries' harvest and possession limit for the period. This will allow vessels fishing lawfully in federal waters to land scup caught offshore in Massachusetts ports.

Discussion Items

The MFAC reviewed a first draft of a letter to the Baker Administration advocating for enhanced fisheries enforcement. Several amendments to the letter were suggested. A revised draft will be reviewed by MFAC at their November 2019 business meeting.

The 2020 commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits for scup, black sea bass, bluefish and fluke were set at a recent joint meeting of the ASMFC and MAFMC. DMF summarized these limits and then there was some discussion among the MFAC and DMF regarding anticipated recreational fishing limits for these species next year.

DMF reviewed the details of draft Addendum VI to the ASMFC's Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan. This addendum was brought to public hearing this fall and will be voted on at the upcoming ASMFC Striped Bass Management Board meeting. The addendum aims to reduce fishing mortality by 18% in response to the recent benchmark stock assessment for striped bass that found the resource to be overfished with overfishing occurring. DMF and the MAFMC discussed preferred management options. Notably, there was general support for the proposed 28" – 35" recreational slot limit, as opposed to the proposed 35" recreational minimum size.

DMF described the ongoing development of a potential pilot program for the Period I (January 1- April 22) summer flounder fishery. Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and potentially New York were working to develop a program whereby offshore vessels permitted in multiple states could possess summer flounder in quantities not to exceed the aggregate summer flounder limits where they are permitted and offload a state limit in each state where they are permitted. This was requested by industry to allow for them to more efficiently target available quota and enhance their profitability. The states were working to finalize certain conditions to address potential enforcement and reporting issues.

Upcoming Meetings

The MFAC is currently scheduled to meet again on November 14, 2019. All meetings begin at 9AM and are held at DFW's Field Headquarters located at 1 Rabbit Hill Road 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).