



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission October 18, 2022 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the October 18, 2022 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This business meeting was held virtually via Zoom. All meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#) and a recording of the full meeting is posted to [DMF's YouTube channel](#).

Discussion Items

Quota Managed Species Update. DMF reviewed the status of its quota managed fisheries in 2022. This compared landings and quota utilization rates in 2022 to recent years to help demonstrate fishery performance. DMF's presentation focused on bluefish, black sea bass, summer flounder, horseshoe crabs, tautog, and spiny dogfish.

Protected Species Update. DMF reported on three issues relevant to protected species management. First, DMF discussed ongoing federal Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan rulemaking being conducted in response to the federal court's decision in Center for Biological Diversity v. NOAA Fisheries and recent industry stakeholder scoping meetings. Next, DMF briefed the MFAC on proposed federal modifications to Atlantic coastal vessel speed limits to protect right whales. This proposed rule seeks to modify the spatial and temporal limits of the existing speed restricted area; apply the current 10 knot speed limit to vessels between 35' and 65' length; and create a dynamic framework for implementing speed restrictions at times and places outside of speed restricted areas where right whales are known to be present. Lastly, DMF updated the MFAC on the state's Incidental Take Permit application. DMF submitted a draft ITP application to NOAA Fisheries in July 2022 and NOAA Fisheries provided feedback earlier this fall. DMF is now responding to this initial feedback and anticipates submitting a final ITP application later this winter.

Updates Concerning the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). In advance of the November 2022 ASMFC business meeting, DMF staff reviewed three hot button issues. First, based on action by the Mid-Atlantic Council earlier this month, there is an anticipated 60% reduction in the coastwide spiny dogfish quota for 2023. As a result, it is projected the interstate plan's northern region of ME through CT—which receives a 58% share of the coastwide quota—will have its quota allocation reduced from 17.1 mlbs (in 2022) to 7.0 mlbs (in 2023). Given recent landing trends, the anticipated 2023 quota (coastwide and northern region) will be set above where landings have been in recent years, although some states with individual quota shares may struggle with their allocation at the reduced quota. Second, the preliminary 2022 stock assessment for striped bass will be subject to review and approval by the ASMFC's Striped Bass Board next month. The assessment shows that while the stock is overfished (SSB estimated at 64,805 metric tons with a threshold of 85,457 metric tons), the management measures adopted through Addendum VI reduced fishing mortality to below the target level and overfishing is no longer occurring (fishing mortality rate is 0.14 with a threshold of 0.2 and a target of 0.17). If the current fishing mortality rate persists, the assessment projects there is a 78.6% chance the stock will be rebuilt by the 2029 deadline and as a result further catch reduction measures

are not necessary at present. Had the stock assessment demonstrated additional cuts in fishing mortality were necessary, Amendment 7 would provide the Board the opportunity to take immediate action to achieve this conservation. Lastly, the ASMFC's Menhaden Board is expected to take final action on Draft Addendum I to the fishery management plan. This addendum considers changes to state-by-state quota allocations in response to changes in stock distribution and availability since these baseline allocations were set, as well as management actions to constrain the Incidental Catch and Small Scale Set Aside fishery to prevent the annual total allowable catch (TAC) from being exceeded. Additionally, the Board will set the TAC for 2023 – 2025 and the expectation is there will be an increase. Following these decisions by the ASMFC, DMF will convene an industry scoping meeting to consider changes to the state's regulatory program for 2023.

Updates Concerning Federal Fisheries Management. DMF provided a high-level summary of the recent September NEFMC meeting in Gloucester, MA and an overview of issues coming before the Council at its December meeting in Newport, RI. For sea scallops, the NEFMC declined to develop a limited access leasing program. The development of Framework 36—to set 2023 specifications and 2024 default measures—remains ongoing. For multi-species groundfish, the development of Framework 65—to set 2023-2024/2025 specifications, rebuild cod, and consider revisions to the Allowable Biological Catch control rule—remains ongoing. The NEFMC approved the 2023 – 2025 specifications for Atlantic herring and will continue to develop Framework 7 to address Georges Bank spawning protections. On habitat issues, the NEFMC recommended GARFO keep the Stellwagen Bank Dedicated Habitat Research Area and future recommendations will be provided for the Georges Bank Dedicated Habitat Research Area; initiated a framework to allow for the development of Atlantic salmon aquaculture; and provided GARFO will feed back on future experimental fishery permits for the surf clam dredge fishery to access certain areas of the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area around Nantucket Shoals. The NEFMC will be holding introductory workshops on eco-system based management throughout late-October and early-November. There was also some discussion about offshore wind energy development, climate change planning, and marine sanctuaries and monuments.

Upcoming Meetings

The next MFAC business meeting is scheduled for November 22, 2022 at DFW's Field Headquarters located at 1 Rabbit Hill Road in Westborough, MA.