



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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July 10, 2023

### Marine Fisheries Advisory

#### **NEW RULES GOVERNING COMMERCIAL SUMMER FLOUNDER FISHERY AND IN-SEASON ADJUSTMENT TO INCREASE SUMMERTIME TRIP LIMITS**

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has filed new regulations affecting the commercial summer flounder fishery. This action: (1) increases the January 1 – April 22 (Period I) trip limit from 3,000 pounds to 10,000 pounds; (2) increases the April 23 – August 31 (summertime) trip limit from 500 pounds to 600 pounds for net fishers and from 300 pounds to 400 pounds for hook and liners; (3) maintains the existing trip limit for September, whereby summertime trip limits remain in effect if less than 20% of the quota remains in place on September 1 or the trip limit is increased to 800 pounds for all gear types if more than 20% of the quota remains on September 1; (4) increases the October 1 – December 31 (fall) trip limit to 10,000 pounds if more than 5% of the quota remains on October 1; (5) lengthens the summer flounder landing window to allow vessels to possess and land summer flounder between 6AM and 10PM; and (6) revises the small-mesh trip limit language to clarify that only vessels fishing with small mesh are subject to the 100 pound incidental catch limit. These new rules go into effect on July 21, 2023.

At their July 10 business meeting, the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission voted unanimously in support of DMF's in-season adjustment recommendation to increase the 2023 summertime trip limits. Therefore, effective July 11, 2023, the commercial summer flounder trip limit for net fishers will be increased to 600 pounds and the trip limit for hook fishers will be increased to 400 pounds (see [Declaration Notice](#)). This in-season adjustment is consistent with the above-described regulatory change and allows these adjustments to be more-timely implemented on July 11, rather than July 21.

These actions are designed to take advantage of the available commercial summer flounder quota by increasing landings relative to the current regulatory environment to the benefit of the state's seafood economy. Massachusetts' annual summer flounder quota has been rising since its all-time low in 2017 in response to increases to the coastwide quota based on the results of the most recent stock assessments and a change in how the coastwide quota is allocated among the states resulting in a heightened share for Massachusetts. For 2022, Massachusetts quota was set at 1.39 million pounds—the highest level it has been in more than a decade—and for 2023, the quota remains similarly elevated at about 1.36 million pounds.

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