



**MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission
August 16, 2023 Meeting Summary**

This document serves as a brief summary of the August 16, 2023 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 the recording of this business meeting has been published on [DMF's YouTube channel](#).

Items for Future Public Hearing

Wildlife Compact. Last year, former Governor Baker signed into law Chapter 145 of the Acts of 2022 which resulted in Massachusetts entering the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact. This is a reciprocal agreement whereby a violation that results in a permit sanction in one state can be used as the basis to take a similar permit sanction in the violator's home state, as well as any other state where the violator may apply for a permit. The state was currently working to develop implementing regulations and anticipated going out to public hearing on this issue this upcoming winter.

Lobster Addendum XXVII. In May 2023, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) approved Addendum XXVII to the American Lobster fishery management plan (FMP). This addendum seeks to take a proactive approach to increasing spawning stock biomass for the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank lobster stock, which is expected to decline in coming years based on observed declines in recruitment. For 2024, the addendum requires that all states: (1) establish a maximum size of 6 ¾" for state waters portion of OCCLCMA, consistent with the federal portion of OCCLCMA and LCMA3; (2) reduce the v-notch standard from a ¼" sharp sided notch to a 1/8" notch with or without setal hairs for the state waters portion of the OCCLCMA, consistent with the federal portion of OCCLCMA and LCMA3; and (3) limit the issuance of trap tags in LMCA1 and LMCA 3 to the permit holders trap allocation, thereby eliminating the additional 10% issued for anticipated gear loss. Then in future years, should the stock decline below 35% the 2016 – 2018 reference period, a series of additional conservation actions are triggered to occur over the subsequent five-year period. This includes increasing the minimum gauge size and escape panel rules for LMCA 1 and further decreasing the maximum gauge size for OCCLCMA and LCMA 3.

Discussion Items

Federal and Interstate Fisheries Management. DMF staff reviewed the recent Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and ASMFC meetings. The MAFMC update focused on the catch limit specifications for 2024/2025 and resulting anticipated recreational and commercial catch limits for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish; the further development of the Harvest Control Rule used to set recreational harvest limits; and climate change planning. Regarding the ASMFC, DMF discussed the Striped Bass Board's decision to delay the approval of Draft Addendum II to the Striped Bass FMP to consider additional management options. The Board will review the Addendum again at its October meeting. If approved, the timeline for state implementation is uncertain.

Effort Estimation and MRIP. NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) released the results of two draft pilot studies to look at potential biases in how MRIP estimates recreational fishing effort. One of the studies demonstrated there may be a recall bias related to the order that

survey questions are asked—overall estimates of effort were about 30% lower when the 12-month recall questions proceeded the 2-month recall questions. Given high variability among waves, modes, and states, it is difficult to draw specific conclusions from this draft study, however, it is likely that MRIP may be currently overestimating recreational fishing effort. Accordingly, NOAA will conduct a larger, more thorough study in 2024.

Performance of Quota Managed Fisheries. DMF staff reviewed the current year-to-date performance of its commercial quota managed fisheries for black sea bass, bluefish, striped bass, summer flounder, horseshoe crab (bait), and menhaden. DMF may seek to review the management of these commercial fisheries this fall given performance this year and potential quota changes anticipated for 2024. Accordingly, over the next few months, the agency may call on the MFAC to develop focus groups to advise DMF on potential management changes to consider for public hearing.

Offshore Wind Energy Updates. DMF provided the MFAC with an update on offshore wind energy projects. The focused on the status of the various ongoing projects in Southern New England. Additionally, DMF discussed the development of a Wind Energy Area in the Gulf of Maine, for which leasing is expected to begin in 2024 or 2025.

MFAC Permitting Focus Group. The MFAC's Permitting Focus Group met on the evening of August 10. The Focus Group is working with DMF to enhance permit availability to address barriers to entry and portfolio diversification. DMF is currently focused on enhancing its permit bundling policy and developing draft regulations to allow the transfer of latent endorsements to family members and adjust endorsement specific activity standards for transfers. The Focus Group has also provided DMF with additional ideas and concepts to consider moving forward.

Upcoming Meetings

The MFAC will meet next on Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 9AM via Zoom.