



## MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

### November 8, 2016 Meeting Summary

#### Future Public Hearings

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) presented two proposals for future public hearings. The public hearing dates have not been scheduled or announced, although tentatively DMF expects hearings will be held during the winter of 2017. In addition to previously discussed items, the future public hearing proposals presented to the MFAC affect Offshore Lobster Permits and commercial witch flounder limits.

Offshore Lobster Permit Moratorium and Transfers. Since 2003 there has been a moratorium on the issuance of trap gear Offshore Lobster Permits for Lobster Management Areas (LMA) 1 and 2. Fishermen with federal LMA 3 trap allocations have been exempt from this permit moratorium. This exemption allows these federally permitted fishermen to land their lobsters in Massachusetts. With ongoing trap reductions resulting in consolidation in LMA2, DMF is proposing to similarly exempt fishermen with a federal LMA2 trap allocation from the Offshore Lobster Permit moratorium. Additionally, DMF is proposing to make Offshore Lobster Permits transferable for fishermen with a federal LMA1 trap permit.

Commercial Witch Flounder Limits. DMF proposed to reduce the commercial witch flounder limits from 1,000 pounds to a limit not lower than 300 pounds. This reduction is designed to cap landings near current levels and reduce the potential for effort and landings to increase. A reduction is considered necessary as the federal state-waters set-aside for witch flounder has been exceeded in recent years.



Figure 2. Chart showing Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMA) designated by the ASMFC

#### Discussion Items

Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) Sea Scallop Exemption. DMF informed the MFAC of its intention to move forward an exemption request to the National Marine Fisheries Service affecting the sea scallop fishery in the NGOM Management Area (north of 42°20'). If approved by NMFS, the exemption will allow federal Limited Access General Category (LAGC) and LAGC-NGOM sea scallop permit holders to continue to fish in the state-waters portion of the NGOM Management Area after the federal quota for this area is taken.

Nantucket Mobile Gear Petition. DMF also distributed a petition from the Town of Nantucket requesting DMF close waters around Nantucket to mobile gear fishing from May 1 – October 31 and establish a

minimum net mesh size for the inshore squid fishery. DMF indicated it was currently reviewing the petition and would provide an analysis to the MFAC at a future meeting.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. DMF provided a brief review of the October 2016 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission meeting. Comments focused on the approved 6.3% increase to the 2017 menhaden quota and the continued development of an Amendment to the Menhaden Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to address biological reference points and state-by-state quota share allocations. DMF also announced that Massachusetts would host public hearings on this menhaden amendment and an addendum to the Jonah Crab FMP. A public hearing on the [Jonah crab addendum](#) is scheduled for December 12<sup>th</sup> and public hearings on the [menhaden amendment](#) have been scheduled for December 12<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

Other Items. The MFAC received presentations from DMF on the recent shellfish closures caused by norovirus and amnesic shellfish poisoning, as well as a presentation on DMF's white shark research. There was also discussion regarding grey seals management under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and a review of the recent MFAC Law Enforcement Sub-Committee meeting.

### **Future Meetings**

The next meeting is scheduled for December 15, 2016, at 10:30 AM, at the MA Division of Fish and Wildlife's Headquarters, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough. The 2017 MFAC business meeting schedule is forthcoming; however, there is no January meeting scheduled. The MFAC business meeting schedule is published on the [Division's website](#) and agendas are made available approximately 1-week before the scheduled meeting.

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](mailto:jared.silva@state.ma.us)).