



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

October 3, 2017 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the October 3, 2017 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. It provides only an overview of the items discussed. Further discussion of each item is captured in MFAC business meeting minutes for this date.

Action Items

Winter II Commercial Scup Limits. The MFAC unanimously approved DMF’s recommendation regarding the Winter II (November 1 – December 31) commercial scup possession limits for this federally managed quota period. During the 2017 Winter II fishery, vessels may possess and land up to 18,000 pounds of scup in Massachusetts waters. This mirrors the federal limits for the Winter II fishery. Existing summertime (May 1 – October 31) limits remain in effect for the remainder of this month.

Discussion Items

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission reviewed and supported DMF’s proposal to establish a regulated fishery permit endorsement for tautog in 2018 and implement a control date of August 28, 2017. These actions are being taken in anticipation of having to implement a point-of-harvest commercial tautog tagging program by no later than 2019. At this time, DMF has not put forth a proposal to utilize the control date in order to limit participation.

On tautog, DMF also provided the MFAC with an update on Amendment 1 to the Atlantic State’s Marine Fishery Commission’s Tautog Fishery Management Plan. This Amendment requires states implement a point-of-harvest commercial tautog tagging program. The Amendment also address regional management of tautog. For Massachusetts, this means creating regionalized recreational fishing limits with Rhode Island. For 2018, DMF and our counterparts in Rhode Island have proposed to the ASMFC to establish the following recreational limits described in the table below. Later this month, the ASMFC will decide whether this tagging program will be implemented in 2018 or 2019 and review the recreational fishing limit proposal.

MA/RI Recreational Tautog Limits Proposed to ASMFC

Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
April 1 – May 31	3-fish per angler	16"
June 1 – July 31	1-fish per angler in MA	16"
	Closed in RI	N/A
August 1 – October 14	3-fish per angler	16"
October 15 – December 31	5-fish per angler	16"
January 1 – March 31	Closed	N/A

The Massachusetts Environmental Police addressed concerns regarding non-compliance in the Cape Cod Canal striped bass fishery. MFAC members expressed their concerns about poor fish handling practices in this fishery, resulting in observed dead discards. DMF stated that the agency was considering permit sanctions against both commercial and recreational fishing permits for infractions.

DMF briefly discussed its wintertime fluke pilot program, which allows participating vessels to land a weekly limit of 1,000 pounds. Some vessels that participate in this fishery have been interested in being able to land fish in Massachusetts while in possession of both Massachusetts and Rhode Island's weekly limits. DMF is currently considering this request and will likely hold public meetings later this fall to discuss the issue.

Public meetings were held on September 27 and 28 regarding interest in modernizing the state's mobile gear fishing closures. DMF reviewed the comment received at this meeting and stated a draft public hearing proposal is forthcoming.

A review of 2017 quota managed fishery performance was provided.

Other Business

Attorney Bill Henchy spoke to the MFAC. Attorney Henchy represents two surf clam dredge operators who were precluded from fishing with surf clam dredge gear in Provincetown town waters under town Conservation Commission regulations. These regulations, resulting law suits and potential legislative actions were discussed. The MFAC is expected to weigh in on this issue again at their November meeting.

Future Meetings

Due to scheduling conflicts the next MFAC business meeting was moved from Thursday, November 2, 2017 to Wednesday, November 1, 2017. The following meeting remains scheduled for December 14, 2017. Meetings will be held at the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Westborough Field Headquarters and they begin at 10:00 AM.

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).