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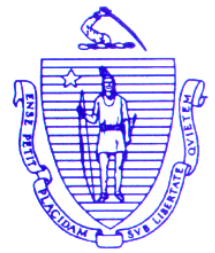
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April 16, 2013

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Marine Fisheries and Environmental Police to Introduce a New Whelk Gauge

A key provision of the Commonwealth's conservation strategy for channeled and knobbed whelks is compliance with the minimum size. This season a new measuring device will be used to measure whelk shell width to improve compliance with minimum size standard. The gauge will be demonstrated at the upcoming public hearings scheduled for April 17 and 18. Management of the whelk fishery and the state waters scallop fishery are the topics of the hearings.

Current regulations (322 CMR 6.21) enacted 20 years ago require all retained whelks to measure at least $2\frac{3}{4}$ " shell width. The regulation defines *Shell Width* as *the diameter of the shell measured across its greatest width perpendicular to the long axis of the shell*. Because the whelk shell is asymmetrical this measurement can vary, and in the absence of a widely accepted gauge and method, there has been insufficient attention paid to complying with this minimum size. Fishermen have used a variety of devices: a ring, a hole in a board, or a metal can (cylinder) through which the smallest shells can pass, but results are highly dependent on the angle at which the shell is inserted.

In light of the increase in fishing effort and the recent concerns about the minimum size being inadequate to protect spawning stock, more uniformity is needed in the measurement and enforcement of this size standard. DMF has been working with Environmental Police and the industry to establish a standard gauge for whelk measurement to improve compliance. Working with selected fishermen, DMF issued prototype gauges made of cut aluminum stock. The result is an open top chute that is at least 6" long with two $1\frac{1}{4}$ " tall walls that are $2\frac{3}{4}$ " apart. The base of the chute is scored along the center line and this line allows the user to consistently orient the whelk properly when passing the whelk through the chute.



To use the gauge, hold the shell with the opening down, and the center line aligned with the apex of the spiral at the top and the center of the (siphonal canal) on the bottom. Any whelk that passes through the chute is undersized and must be released alive. Officers will be using the chute gauge for enforcement of the minimum size. Fishermen are strongly recommended to use a similar device to ensure compliance.

**Wednesday, April 17, 2013 at the Katharine Cornell Theater, 54 Spring Street, Tisbury,
Massachusetts From 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM.**

**Thursday, April 18, 2013 at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy Admiral's Hall, 101 Academy
Drive, Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts. From 6:00 PM – 9:30 PM.**

For further information contact DMF at 617-626-1520 or please visit our website at
www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.