



MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

May 9, 2019 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the May 9, 2019 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. Further details are available in the supplemental meeting materials and MFAC business meeting minutes.

Action Items

Sea Herring Effort Controls for Management Area 1A

The MFAC unanimously approved the Director's recommendation on sea herring effort controls for Management Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine). This recommendation was to close Management Area 1A to all commercial fishing for and possession of sea herring, including incidental take. Then the Director would allow vessels to declare into a directed fishery. These qualifying vessels would receive Letters of Authorization to allow fishing activity consistent with the effort controls approved by the ASMFC's Sea Herring Section. The initial effort controls approved by the ASMFC's Sea Herring Section for the period of July 15 – September 30 allow qualified vessels to fish for and land sea herring Mondays – Thursdays. Category A federal permit holders would be subject to a 160,000 pound weekly limit; Category C federal permit would be subject to a 55,000 pound trip limit; Category D federal permit holders would be subject to a 6,600 pound trip limit; and state-only permit holders would be subject to a 2,000 pound trip limit. These effort controls may be revised in season in response to quota availability and bait demand.

Discussion Items

Review of NEFMC and ASMFC Business Meetings

DMF provided the MFAC with an overview of the April 2019 NEFMC and ASMFC meetings. The NEFMC meeting focused on sea herring and groundfish management, wind energy development, right whales and Council research priorities. The ASMFC meeting focused on lobster management and reducing the risk of right whales becoming entangled in buoy lines; the striped bass stock assessment and the development of an addendum to address overfishing; and commercial quota reallocations for black sea bass and fluke in response to climate driven changes in geographical distribution.

Review of Recent Black Sea Bass and Scup Head Boat Meeting

On April 12, 2019 DMF hosted a meeting with the black sea bass and scup head boat fleet at the agency's New Bedford office. The meeting focused on working with the head boat fleet to improve angler compliance and cooperation with MRIP samplers. DMF felt the meeting was productive, and is considering similar annual meetings with charter boat operators.

Wind Energy Update

DMF informed the MFAC that the Vineyard Wind Fisheries Working Group was posed to meet on May 16, 2019 to provide Vineyard Wind with a fisheries mitigation package. DMF was optimistic that Vineyard Wind would approve the package and then discussions would begin on how to administer the

mitigation funding. DMF staff were also involved in developing research priorities associated with the impacts of wind energy development of habitat and marine species.

Shellfish Management Updates

DMF reviewed the May 6, 2019 Shellfish Advisory Panel (SAP) meeting. The SAP received a number of presentations from DMF staff and discussed a variety of shellfish issues affecting aquaculture, Vp management, shellfish sanitation and the upcoming ISSC meeting.

DMF also provided an update on the Massachusetts Shellfish Initiative (MSI). The MSI was initiated several years back to take a holistic look at the various aspects of the shellfish industry, and to define and address the issues and challenges facing the industry. The initiative got off to a slow start and there were concerns from rank-and-file shellfish fishermen about its purpose and membership. However, DMF Deputy Director Dan McKiernan has taken over as the Chair of the Task Force and is focused on improving the MSI's transparency and inclusiveness. Following an April meeting in Duxbury, the Assessment Committee has been tasked with writing a white paper on shellfish and shellfish fisheries in the Commonwealth. Then a Scoping Committee will review the various issues raised in the whitepaper and receive testimony from the public about challenges and solutions to issues facing the shellfish industry. Former State Senator Rob O'Leary was hired to coordinate the Scoping Committee.

Presentation on Recreational Cod Avoidance

DMF researcher Micah Dean provided the MFAC with a presentation on his work to map areas where recreational anglers may target haddock while avoiding cod in the Gulf of Maine. This information will then be provided to recreational anglers in map books and on a mobile phone application.

Future Public Hearings

DMF notified the MFAC its intention to move two regulatory items forward to public hearing. The first item is a proposal to reduce the state-waters ocean quahog trip limit from 26 cages to 8 cages. This proposal is based on a petition from a shellfish dredge fisherman who is concerned with new fishing effort entering state-waters in response to the federal Nantucket Shoals surf clam dredge habitat closures. The second item is a proposal to better describe the existing permitting tiers for the menhaden fishery. With potential interest in this fishery to fill lobster bait shortages, there is a need to clearly document the menhaden permitting and management scheme so that potential interested parties understand where and when they can fish and how much menhaden they can take with certain permit combinations. DMF also discussed its decision to not move forward a petition to further tighten the owner-operator exemptions for trap fisheries by eliminating the family exemption.

Bycatch Discussion

DMF responded to several questions and comments regarding bycatch in multi-species trawl fisheries. Of particular interest was scup bycatch in the squid fishery.

Upcoming Meetings

The MFAC is currently scheduled to meet again on June 13. All meetings begin at 9AM and are held at DFW's Field Headquarters located at 1 Rabbit Hill Road in Westborough, MA.

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).