



# MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

## June 13, 2019 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the June 13, 2019 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. Further details are available in the supplemental meeting materials and MFAC business meeting minutes.

### Action Items

#### 2019 Recreational Fishing Limits

The MFAC unanimously approved the Director’s recommendation to adopt the 2019 recreational fishing limits for black sea bass, scup, cod and haddock. For black sea bass and scup, the recommendation was to codify those limits previously established by emergency regulation in April 2019 (Table 1). For cod and haddock, the recommendation was to allow DMF to file those regulations currently proposed by NMFS (Table 2) following federal implementation.

Fishery	Open Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
Scup, Private	January 1 – December 31	30 fish Vessel limit of 150 fish (> 5 anglers onboard)	9"
Scup, For-Hire	January 1 – April 30 May 1 – June 30 July 1 – December 31	30 fish 50 fish 30 fish	9"
Black Sea Bass	May 18 – September 8	5 fish	15"

Fishery	Open Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size
Gulf of Maine Haddock	May 1 – February 29 April 15 – April 30	15 fish 15 fish	17"
Gulf of Maine Cod	September 15 – September 30 April 15 – April 30	1 fish 1 fish	21"
Georges Bank Cod	January 1 – December 31	1 fish	21"

### Future Public Hearing Items

#### Methods of Meeting NMFS Mandates to Reduce Vertical Lines and Entanglement Risk

DMF informed the MFAC that the Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission’s (ASMFC) Lobster Board meeting approved an April 29, 2019 control date for the lobster trap fishery in Lobster Conservation Management Area 1. The control date is meant to notify current and future permit holders that their eligibility to participate in the fishery may be affected by their ability to document prior landings, effort and gear configuration, which may be necessary to implement future vertical line reduction mandates. DMF intends to implement this control date by regulation. Additionally, DMF reviewed those proposals by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team to reduce the number of vertical lines being fished in

the lobster fishery. NMFS is currently reviewing this proposal and DMF expects NMFS will publish draft regulations for public hearing this fall.

#### Commercial Tautog Tagging

The ASMFC Tautog Board has mandated that coastal states implement a commercial point-of-harvest tautog tagging program for 2020. DMF reviewed the mandatory provisions of the tagging plan. Additionally, to effectively administer the tagging program, DMF intends to use the August 27, 2017 control date and establish certain eligibility criteria to limit entry into the fishery and constrain the number of potential participants to about 150-200. The annual tautog quota is about 60,000 pounds.

#### Period I Winter Fluke Trip Limits for 2020

With more than an 80% increase in the state's commercial fluke quota from 2018 to 2019 and the expectation that the quota will remain at this elevated level through 2021, DMF intends to increase the Period I (February 1 – April 22) trip limits for fluke from 500 pounds to 1,000 pounds. This should enhance profitability and allow the fleet to better utilize the quota available to them.

#### Retail Farmer's Market Permit for 2020

For 2020, DMF will pursue a new seafood dealer permit category for the retail sale of fish at farmer's market. As more dealers are looking to sell their products at farmer's markets, it is appropriate to develop a new permit category specific to this activity. This will also enable DPH to provide more clear and precise guidance regarding the permit category, local inspection and the food code regulation.

#### Coastal Sharks

DMF intends to conform state regulation to the interstate fishery management plan for coastal sharks. The focus of this will be on sex-specific recreational minimum size limits for short fin makos and mandating the use of circle hooks for baited recreational shark fishing. DMF will also pursue several refinements to better align state and federal regulations.

#### Regulatory Housekeeping

DMF is proposing several refinements and technical corrections to its existing regulations. This includes codifying long-standing declarations and permit conditions by enacting regulations to close Pleasant Bay to the bait harvest of horseshoe crabs; adopt the 6,000 pound spiny dogfish trip limit; and establish a moratorium on the northern shrimp fishery. Finally, more uniform terminology in the state's lobster regulations concerning Lobster Conservation Management Areas is warranted.

#### Horseshoe Crab Assessment Presentation

DMF biologist Derek Perry provided an overview of the recent horseshoe crab stock assessment. As overfishing and overfished definitions have not been adopted, the stock is assessed based on the percentage of surveys within a geographic region and their probability of being better or worse than a 1998 reference point. Two of the four geographic regions were assigned a neutral status, one was assigned a good status, and one a poor status. The Northeast Region was given a neutral designation, as the RI survey came back negative, while the MA survey came back positive.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

The MFAC is currently scheduled to meet again on August 15, 2019. 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](mailto:jared.silva@state.ma.us)).