



## MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

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### September 19, 2019 Meeting Summary

This document serves as a brief summary of the September 19, 2019 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. Further details are available in the supplemental meeting materials and MFAC business meeting minutes.

#### **Action Items**

##### 2020 Implementation of the Commercial Tautog Tagging Program

The MFAC unanimously approved the Director's recommendation to implement a commercial harvester tautog tagging program. DMF will begin administering this program in 2020. Commercial fishermen will obtain single use tags from DMF and tag all commercially caught tautog through the operculum (gill cover) prior to the fish being offloaded from the fishing vessel for the purposes of carrying, transportation, sale or exchange. Commercial fishermen will also be required to submit annual tagging reports and return all unused tags within two-weeks of notification from DMF following the end of that year's commercial fishing season. Seafood dealers and purveyors will be prohibited from receiving, possessing or purchasing tautog that have not been appropriately tagged. Dealers and purveyors will be required to liquidate their supply of tautog from the prior calendar year by February 28 and dealers will be required to liquidate their supply of Massachusetts tagged tautog within two weeks after the close of the season.

##### Period I Summer Flounder Limits

The MFAC unanimously approved the Director's recommendation to adjust Period I (January 1 – April 22) commercial fluke limits. These adjustments include allowing the commercial possession and landing of tautog in Massachusetts during the month of January and increasing the commercial trip limits from 500 to 1,000 pounds while the fishery is open. With the annual fluke quota expected to remain at elevated levels through 2021, this will provide offshore fishing vessels with additional quota access.

##### Adjustments to Period II Summer Flounder Limits

The MFAC voted in favor (4-3) of the Director's recommendation to add Saturdays as an open commercial fishing day in the summer flounder fishery during the period of September 21 – October 31. This will provide the inshore fleet with additional access to the remaining quota, and help mitigate against the loss of fishing opportunities due to poor weather conditions in the fall. While the measure passed, there were objections due to potential user group conflicts with the recreational fishery.

##### Reductions to the State-Waters Ocean Quahog Trip Limit

The MFAC unanimously approved the Director's recommendation to reduce the state-waters ocean quahog trip limit from 26 cages (832 bu) to 8 cages (256 bu). This will allow fishermen to fish on available sets of ocean quahogs for longer durations and reduce potential gear conflicts. Additionally, the revised limit approximates the existing state-waters surf clam limit (200 bu), which has effectively supported a day boat fishery.

### Housekeeping Measure

The MFAC unanimously approved the Director's three housekeeping recommendations to adopt long-standing permit conditions as regulation. The approved codifications follow: (1) prohibit the harvest of horseshoe crabs for bait purposes within the Pleasant Bay and Little Pleasant Bay, which has been in effect since 2006; (2) establish the 6,000 pound spiny dogfish trip limit, which has been in place since 2016 and is expected to remain in effect through at least 2021; and (3) adopt the moratorium on the commercial harvest of northern shrimp, which was implemented in 2014 and will to remain in place as the stock's condition is not expected improve and will likely worsen due to environmental factors.

### **Permitting Decisions**

#### Retail Farmer's Market Permit

For 2020, DMF will establish a new "retail farmer's market" permit category. This permit will allow the sale of certain raw fish products, as well as live lobsters and crabs at farmer's markets. Activities conducted under this permit are subject to written approval of the Department of Public Health or local Boards of Health.

#### Tautog Permitting

In response to the implementation of the commercial harvester tautog tagging program, DMF will use the August 27, 2017 control date to limit entry to the commercial tautog fishery beginning in 2020. Only those commercial fishermen who held a commercial regulated fishery tautog permit endorsement in 2018 or 2019 and sold more than 120 pounds during any calendar year between 2010 and 2016 will be eligible to obtain a tautog permit endorsement in 2020.

### **Discussion Items**

DMF and the MFAC discussed several issues. DMF was delaying final recommendations on recent public hearing proposals affecting coastal shark conservation, as well as permitting for the Lobster Conservation and Management Area 1 trap fishery. Massachusetts received a transfer of menhaden quota from the state of Connecticut allowing the the commercial limited entry fishery to re-open at a 25,000 pound trip limit. This provides small-scale and mid-scale seiners with continued access to the resource while it remains in our waters. Menhaden is an important bait species for use by lobstermen and recreational fishermen. DMF did not recommend adjusting the number of open commercial striped bass fishing days. A joint meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is scheduled for October 2019 to begin to set the 2020 fishing specifications for scup, black sea bass, summer flounder, and bluefish. DMF provided a preliminary overview of the anticipated specifications. An update on the Period II Pilot Program for summer flounder was also provided.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

The MFAC is currently scheduled to meet again on October 17, 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)).