



**MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission  
December 20, 2022 Meeting Summary**

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This document serves as a brief summary of the December 20, 2022 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting. This business meeting was held virtually via Zoom. All meeting materials are available on the [MFAC's past meeting website](#) and a recording of the full meeting is posted to [DMF's YouTube channel](#).

**Action Items and Final Recommendations**

*2023 Period I Summer Flounder Trip Limit.* The MFAC unanimously approved DMF's recommendation to increase the 2023 Period I summer flounder trip limit from 3,000 pounds to 10,000 pounds. This action may enhance the use of the available annual quota, which has been underutilized since 2019. For 2023, Massachusetts' summer flounder commercial quota is expected to be set at 1.36 million pounds, resulting in a Period I allocation of about 400,000 pounds. The Period I fishery occurs principally offshore in federal waters and this action is designed to encourage permitted vessels to target summer flounder offshore and to land their summer flounder catch in Massachusetts.

*Letters to Governor Baker and Governor-Elect Healey.* The MFAC consented to letters being sent on behalf of Chairman Kane to Governor Baker and Governor-Elect Healey. The letter to Governor Baker thanks his outgoing administration for their work on important fisheries management issues; the letter to Governor-Elect Healey welcomes the new administration and invites their cooperation on the various challenges facing the Commonwealth's fisheries and seafood industry.

**Discussion Items**

*Federal Fisheries Management Update.* DMF provided the MFAC with an update from the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), as well as a summary of the recent joint Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) meeting.

The NEFMC update reviewed the December 5 – December 8 meeting in Newport, RI; provided a preview of the January 24 – January 26 meeting in Portsmouth, NH; and addressed other NEFMC related business. At the recent NEFMC meeting, the Council approved Framework 65 to the multi-species groundfish fishery management plan (FMP), which addressed the rebuilding plan for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod, set 2023-2024/2025 specifications, and dealt with the Georges Bank cod recreational catch target. The Council also approved Framework 36 to the Sea Scallop FMP. This framework sea scallop access area and open bottom fishery specifications for the Limited Access and Limited Access General Category fleets in the Northern Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic. Staff also reviewed the 2023 spiny dogfish quota; delays in Framework 13 to the monkfish FMP; and actions to retain dedicated habitat research areas in Stellwagen Bank and Georges Bank. The preliminary agenda for the January meeting has the Council addressing recreational groundfish management measures and a possible control date for the NGOM sea scallop fishery. As for other business, DMF staff discussed NEFMC management priorities for 2023; the federal sea herring industry disaster aid package; portside sampling; and floating wind energy development. Staff pledged to follow-up on Commissioner member questions regarding monkfish discard methodology and the breakdown of Georges Bank cod quota.

A joint ASMFC-MAFMC meeting was held on December 13 to address recreational fishery management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass for 2023. There are a number of new factors influencing the management of these recreational fisheries in 2023, including new commercial/recreational sector allocations, new models to better predict recreational harvest, and the implementation of the harvest control rule. For summer flounder, the outcome is status quo measures. For black sea bass and scup, 10% reductions in projected coastwide harvest are required, to be achieved through established state/regional processes. Following Technical Committee meetings in January to establish guidelines and methodologies for developing rule changes, DMF will strive to hold scoping meetings to discuss potential adjustments before implementing emergency regulations for May 1, 2023.

*Protected Species Management Update.* DMF provided a high-level overview of the deliberations at the recent Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) meeting. However, the 2023 federal omnibus spending bill was filed and contains language to delay the December 31, 2024 deadline for new ALWTRP rule-making affecting lobster and Jonah crab trap fisheries until December 31, 2028. The bill also contains language for enhanced right whale monitoring efforts, research into whale safe gear technologies, and potential modifications to the Decision Support Tool used to model entanglement risk.

*Recent Stakeholder Meetings on Summer Flounder and Horseshoe Crabs.* On December 13, DMF held stakeholder meetings on the management of the state's summer flounder and horseshoe crab fisheries. The focus of the summer flounder meeting was how to enhance quota utilization, particularly during the inshore, summertime fishery. Potential solutions to be investigated include change to minimum net mesh sizes, a weekly aggregate program, higher trip limits, increased access to permits, and adjusting seasonal quota allocations. The focus of the horseshoe crab meeting was to discuss management issues related to changing dynamics in the fishery due to increasing local demand from the biomedical industry. Issues discussed included trip limits and permitting for bait and biomedical harvesters; lunar closures and spawning protections; and best management practices for the biomedical industry. The conservation community also advocated for increasing spawning protections, closing certain embayments to harvest, eliminating the bait fishery and phasing out the biomedical fishery, and improving metrics for measuring the health of the population.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

The MFAC has not yet set its meeting schedule for 2023.