



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
21 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0021

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2016 Compliance Guide for Maine DMR Halibut Regulations

The document was developed as an alternative to the mandatory training class for first time commercial fishermen to receive their halibut endorsement; and as a as a general guide for all fishermen to understand and comply with the Maine Department of Marine Resources Atlantic halibut regulations.

Please note that this summary applies to Maine territorial waters¹ only and does not include every detail of the Atlantic halibut regulations. For questions or more information contact Meredith Mendelson at Meredith.mendelson@maine.gov or (207) 624-6579 or refer to [DMR Chapter 34](#) and [8.20\(f\)](#).

Information for each sector is located on the following pages:

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¹ Territorial waters" means all waters of the State within the rise and fall of the tide seaward to the 3-nautical-mile line.

Recreational (Non-Party/Charter) Fishermen:

Season

- Open May 1 – June 30 inclusive
- Closed July 1 – April 30 inclusive

License

- Recreational fishermen are required to register in the Saltwater Recreational Fishing Registry. The online registry can be accessed at www.maine.gov/saltwater.

Tagging Requirement and Annual Landing Limits

- Atlantic halibut must be immediately tagged with a Maine State Recreational Tag, or released. Tags must remain attached through arrival at the fish's final destination.
- 2016 recreational halibut tags are white with black lettering.
- Recreational halibut tag applications can be downloaded at: <http://www.maine.gov/dmr/license/index.htm>
- Anglers may be issued up to 5 Atlantic halibut tags per year.
 - All tags must be assigned to one vessel.
 - Maximum of 5 Atlantic halibut may be landed per vessel per year. Additionally, federal regulations restrict vessels to one halibut per trip.
 - A person who has not been issued Atlantic halibut tags may land an Atlantic halibut using tags issued to another person, when aboard the vessel that the tags are assigned to.
- Individuals may possess only one type of landing tag (recreational or commercial) per year. Only one type of landing tag (recreational or commercial) may be assigned to any one vessel per year.

Minimum Size Limit

- Head on: 41"
- Head off: 32" (Measurement made from the base of the pectoral fin where it joins the fish's body to the tip of the tail).
- Filleting at sea is prohibited. Halibut may not be dressed or processed at sea in a manner that inhibits Marine Patrol's ability to determine compliance with the head off measurement as specified above.
- Aquaculture grown halibut are exempt from minimum size limit.

Gear and Handling Requirements

- Must use size 14/0, 15/0, or 16/0 circle hooks only.
- Maximum of 100 hooks per angler. Maximum 450 hooks per vessel.
- Tub trawls are legal and anglers must mark the trawl buoys with their name and the words "tub trawl".
- Atlantic halibut may not be transferred between vessels.

Party/Charter Vessel Operators

Season

- Open May 1 – June 30 inclusive
- Closed July 1 – April 30 inclusive

License

- Party/charter vessel operators are required to obtain a Recreational Saltwater Fishing Operators License and register in the Saltwater Recreational Fishing Registry. The Operator's License can be downloaded at <http://www.maine.gov/dmr/license/index.htm> and the online registry can be accessed at www.maine.gov/saltwater.

Tagging Requirement and Annual Landing Limits

- Atlantic halibut must be immediately tagged with a Maine State Recreational Tag, or released. Tags must remain attached through arrival at the fish's final destination.
- 2016 recreational halibut tags are white with black lettering.
- Recreational halibut tag applications can be downloaded at: <http://www.maine.gov/dmr/license/index.htm> Party/charter vessel operators may be issued a maximum of 25 halibut tags per year.
- Party/charter vessels may land a maximum of 25 halibut per year. Additionally, federal regulations restrict vessels to one halibut per trip.
- Individuals may possess only one type of landing tag (recreational or commercial) per year. Only one type of landing tag (recreational or commercial) may be assigned to any one vessel per year.

Minimum Size Limit

- Head on is 41"
- Head off is 32" (Measurement made from the base of the pectoral fin where it joins the fish's body to the tip of the tail).
- Filleting at sea is prohibited. Halibut may not be dressed or processed at sea in a manner that inhibits Marine Patrol's ability to determine compliance with the head off measurement as specified above.
- Aquaculture grown halibut are exempt from minimum size limit.

Gear and Handling Requirements

- Must use size 14/0, 15/0, or 16/0 circle hooks only.
- Maximum of 100 hooks per angler. Maximum 450 hooks per vessel.
- Tub trawls are legal and anglers must mark the trawl buoys with their name and the words "tub trawl".
- Atlantic halibut may not be transferred between vessels.

Commercial Fishermen Without a Federal Groundfish Permit

Season

- Open May 1 – June 30 inclusive
- Closed July 1 – April 30 inclusive

License Requirement

- DMR Commercial Fishing License with Atlantic halibut endorsement. Application can be downloaded at: <http://www.maine.gov/dmr/license/2015Harvest.pdf> or by contacting licensing (207) 624-6550.

Tagging Requirement and Annual Landing Limits

- Commercial fishermen must immediately tag Atlantic halibut with a Maine State Commercial tag, or release them. Landing tags must be attached tightly around or through the tail just before the tail fin and must remain attached to the fish until it has reached its final destination.
- Commercial tags can be requested on the Commercial Harvesting License application or by contacting licensing.
- 2016 commercial halibut tags are green with white lettering.
- Commercial fishermen are allowed a maximum of 25 tags per year.
 - All tags must be declared to one vessel.
 - Vessels may land a maximum of 25 Atlantic halibut per year.
- Illegal for more than one type (recreational or commercial) of landing tag to be assigned to any one vessel per year.
- No individual may possess more than one type of landing tag per year.

Gear and Handling Requirements

- Must use size 14/0, 15/0, or 16/0 circle hooks. No vessel may fish using more than 450 circle hooks.
- With the exception of lobster, it is illegal to possess or land other marine species while fishing for Atlantic halibut aboard commercial vessels in Maine's territorial waters. Lobster must be harvested in accordance with [DMR Chapter 25](#).
- When fishing with a tub trawl, must have marking buoys on each end of trawl clearly labeled with your name and Maine Commercial Fishing License number.
- Atlantic halibut may not be transferred between vessels.

Minimum Size Restrictions

- Head on is 41"
- Head off is 32" (Measurement made from the base of the pectoral fin where it joins the fish's body to the tip of the tail).
- Filleting at sea is prohibited. Halibut may not be dressed or processed at sea in a manner that inhibits Marine Patrol's ability to determine compliance with the head off measurement as specified above.
- Aquaculture grown halibut are exempt from minimum size limit.

Reporting

- Any harvester with a halibut endorsement is required to maintain a log of trip level catch and effort information and submit it to the DMR Landings Program each month of the halibut season. Contact Alice Mayberry at (207) 633-9560 or alice.mayberry@maine.gov to obtain logbooks.

Commercial Fishermen With a Federal Groundfish Permit

Season

- Open May 1 – June 30 inclusive
- Closed July 1 – April 30 inclusive

License Requirement

- DMR Commercial Fishing License with Atlantic halibut endorsement. The application can be downloaded at: <http://www.maine.gov/dmr/license/2015Harvest.pdf> or by contacting licensing (207) 624-6550.

Tagging Requirement and Annual Landing Limits

- Commercial fishermen must immediately tag Atlantic halibut with a Maine State Commercial tag, or release them. Landing tags must be attached tightly around or through the tail just before the tail fin and must remain attached to the fish until it has reached its final destination.
- 2016 commercial halibut tags are green with white lettering.
- Commercial tags can be requested on the Commercial Harvesting License application or by contacting licensing.
- Federal groundfish permit holders may be issued more than 25 tag per person, but the 25 tag per vessel limit still applies.
 - Tags must be declared to a vessel at the time of issuance.
 - Vessels may land a maximum of 25 Atlantic halibut per year. Additionally, federal regulations restrict vessels to one halibut per trip whether fishing in State or Federal waters.
- Illegal for more than one type (recreational or commercial) of landing tag to be assigned to any one vessel per year.
- No individual may possess more than one type of landing tag per year.

Gear and Handling Requirements

- Must use size 14/0, 15/0, or 16/0 circle hooks. No vessel may fish using more than 450 circle hooks.
- With the exception of lobster, it is illegal to possess or land other marine species while fishing for Atlantic halibut aboard commercial vessels in Maine's territorial waters. Lobster must be harvested in accordance with [DMR Chapter 25](#).
- When fishing with a tub trawl, must have marking buoys on each end of trawl clearly labeled with their name and Maine Commercial Fishing License number.
- Illegal to transfer Atlantic halibut between vessels.

Minimum Size Restrictions

- Head on is 41"
- Head off is 32" (Measurement made from the base of the pectoral fin where it joins the fish's body to the tip of the tail).
- Filleting at sea is prohibited. Halibut may not be dressed or processed at sea in a manner that inhibits Marine Patrol's ability to determine compliance with the head off measurement as specified above.
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Reporting

- Any harvester with a halibut endorsement is required to maintain a log of trip level catch and effort information and submit it to the DMR Landings Program

each month of the halibut season. Contact Alice Mayberry at (207) 633-9560 or alice.mayberry@maine.gov to obtain logbooks.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Can I still get commercial halibut tags even if I did not request them when I applied for my Commercial Fishing License application?

Answer: Yes. You can request commercial halibut tags at any time. Tags can be requested on the Commercial Harvesting License application. However, your license will need to accompany your application and be returned to DMR as you will be issued a new license with the Halibut Endorsement on it.

Question: Does the Department require a training course to catch Atlantic halibut commercially?

Answer: No. The training course is no longer required. The course was replaced by this compliance guide that is mailed to new license holders.

Question: How much do tags cost?

Answer: \$1.00 each for recreational and commercial tags.

Question: What is the difference between commercial regulations for vessels with and without a Federal Multispecies (groundfish) Permit?

Answer: Individuals without a federal groundfish permit may land up to 25 Atlantic halibut per year with one vessel. Federal groundfish permit holders may land up to 25 halibut per year for each vessel that has been assigned a groundfish permit. Additionally, federal regulations restrict vessels to one fish per trip.

Question: If I hold a groundfish permit, I am limited to one halibut per trip. Do I still have to apply for a DMR landing tag?

Answer: Yes, all halibut landed in Maine must have a DMR landing tag.

Question: Are there closed areas for halibut. Do the groundfish closures apply?

Answer: No. Halibut are exempt from the groundfish spawning closure. All of Maine's territorial waters are open to halibut fishing during the open season May 1 – June 30.

Question: Can I haul my halibut trawls on a day that I'm lobster fishing?

Answer: Yes, lobster is not considered a "marine species" by definition, so it is legal to have lobster aboard and be engaged in lobster fishing when hauling trawls or landing halibut.

Question: Can I set a "gangeon" off one of my lobster traps to fish for halibut?

Answer: Yes, as long as the hooks are 14/0, 15/0 or 16/0 circle hooks.

Question: Does the minimum size apply to fish imported from Canada?

Answer: Yes, all halibut coming into Maine must be 41 inches or larger with the head-on or 32 inches or larger with the head-off (from the base of the pectoral fin where it joins the fish's body to the tip of the tail).

Question: If I do not fish, do I have to turn in a landings report?

Answer: Yes, you must submit a landings report for each of the two months of Maine's Atlantic halibut season (twice per season) regardless of your fishing activity. If you do not fish, you should check the "did not fish" box on the landings report.

Question: What would I record for my sea time if I haul halibut trawls and lobster traps on the same trip?

Answer: Estimate the time that it took you to haul your halibut trawls and steam time. Do not record the time it took you to haul your lobster gear.

Additional Contact Information

If you have questions about Maine's Atlantic halibut fishery, please contact the following departments or individuals:

Reporting requirements: Alice Mayberry, DMR Landings Program, W.Boothbay Harbor, (207) 633-9560.

Research questions: Sally Sherman, Scientist, W. Boothbay Harbor, (207) 633-9503.

Management questions: Meredith Mendelson, Deputy Commissioner, Augusta, (207) 624-6579.

Licensing questions: DMR's Licensing Division, Hallowell, (207) 624-6550.

Questions concerning enforcement: Marine Patrol, Division I (NH border to Waldoboro) (207) 633-9595; Division II (Waldoboro to the Canadian border) (207) 667-3373.

Questions about regulations in federal waters: NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office Sustainable Fisheries Division (978) 281-9315.