Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Marine Fisheries
251 Causeway Street, Suite 400
Boston, Massachusetts 02114
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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS
SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 24th, 25th, & 26th, 2009

Under the provisions of M.G.L. Ch 30A and pursuant to the authority found in M.G.L. Ch. 130 ss. 17A & 80 Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) and the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFC) have scheduled a hearing to accept comments on DMF proposals (322 CMR 4.00, 6.09 & 7.00) to:

1. Reduce fishing mortality in the commercial and recreational winter flounder fisheries by implementing:
in the Gulf of Maine:
   a. a 250-lb. daily possession limit for commercially permitted fishermen fishing or seen fishing in state waters; and
   b. either a 4-month recreational closure from September – December or a three fish recreational daily possession limit with no closed season.
in Southern Coastal Waters:
   c. a 50-lb. daily possession limit for commercially permitted fishermen fishing or seen fishing in state waters; and
   d. a two fish recreational daily possession limit.

2. Enact gear and permit modifications for the commercial lobster fishery by:
   a. increasing the lobster trawl maximum length from 2,000-feet to 2,500-feet;
   b. expanding trawl marking exemption area in Boston Harbor and its approaches as well as enacting new trawl marking exemption area in southwestern Cape Cod Bay; and
   c. exempting commercial lobster permit holders who also hold a retail boat permit from having to hold a Wholesale Truck Permit for purposes of transporting only live lobsters and live crabs for sale.

3. Prohibit the commercial harvest of rainbow smelt and implement a recreational daily possession limit as low as 25-fish.

4. Implement coastal shark regulations in compliance with the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Coastal Sharks, including:
   a. establishing recreational and commercial minimum size limits, possession limits, and gear restrictions;
   b. prohibiting possession of some species, filleting of sharks at sea, and finning of sharks; and
   c. establishing additional standards for disposition of commercial and recreational catch.

5. Increase the minimum size (from 4 1/8” to 5”) and decrease the daily possession limit (from 50 to 25”) for recreational and commercial harvest of blue crabs.

6. Clarify that the prohibition on use of gillnets south and west of Cape Cod during April 1 through November 15 does not apply to persons:
   a. using surface gillnets less than 250-square feet to take bait for personal use in the Inshore Restricted Waters; or
   b. permitted to fish surface gillnets in accordance with 322 CMR 4.14 and fishing in the Inshore Restricted Waters as defined in 322 CMR 4.02.

Public hearings have been scheduled for 4PM on August 24th at the Tisbury Senior Center (34 Pine Tree Rd., Vineyard Haven); 6PM on August 25th at the Kingston Town Hall (26 Evergreen St., Kingston) & 6PM on August 26th at the Annisquam River Marine Fisheries Station (30 Emerson Ave., Gloucester).

Comments received by e-mail (marine.fish@state.ma.us), fax (617.626.1509), or mail (251 Causeway St., Suite 400; Boston, MA 02114) will be accepted until 3PM on Friday, August 28, 2009. Copies of proposed regulations may be obtained by contacting Melanie Griffin by email (Melanie.Griffin@state.ma.us), phone (617.626.1528), or at the above fax and mailing address.