

STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

**Notice of Agency Rulemaking Adoption**

**AGENCY:** Department of Marine Resources

**CHAPTER NUMBER AND RULE TITLE:** Chapter 34 Groundfish: Haddock Recreational Size Limit

**ADOPTION FILING NUMBER:** [Leave Blank - Assigned by the Department of the Secretary of State]

**CONCISE SUMMARY:**

This rulemaking decreases the recreational haddock minimum size limit from 18 inches to 17 inches, aligning with recent changes adopted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under NOAA and allowing additional fishing opportunity while maintaining catch within the recreational sub- annual catch limits (ACL).

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** [Leave Blank -- To Be Filled in by the Department of the Secretary of State]

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DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

Chapter 34 – GROUND FISH

TITLE INDEX

34.01 Definitions

34.02 Methods of Mesh Measurement

34.03 Groundfish Spawning Closures

34.04 Groundfish Gear Restrictions

34.05 Commercial Groundfish Restrictions

34.06 Recreational Groundfish Restrictions

34.07 Atlantic Halibut

34.08 Whiting/Silver Hake (*Merluccius bilinearis*) Commercial Effort Restrictions

Chapter 34: Groundfish

**34.01 Definitions**

- A.. **Allocated groundfish species.** "Allocated groundfish species" means cod, witch flounder, American plaice, yellowtail flounder, haddock, pollock, winter flounder, redfish, and white hake for the purposes of this management plan.
- B. **Bait gillnet.** A "Bait Gillnet" is a gillnet with diamond or square stretch mesh, measuring less than 3.5 inches throughout the entire net, is suspended in the water column, and has a maximum length of 2,000 feet.
- C. **Charter or party boat.** A "charter or party boat" is any vessel that carries passengers for hire to engage in recreational fishing activities.
- D. **Coastal waters.** "Coastal waters" means all waters of the State within the rise and fall of the tide out to the limits of the exclusive economic zone as shown on the most recently published Federal Government nautical chart, but does not include areas above any fishway or dam when that fishway or dam is the dividing line between tidewater and fresh water.
- E. **Cod end.** The "cod end" is the terminal section of a trawl net in which captured fish may accumulate.
- F. **Commercial catch.** "Commercial catch" means all multispecies taken with any type of gear except multispecies taken for personal use by hand-held hook and line gear or any Atlantic Halibut taken in accordance with Chapter 34.07 D (5).
- G. **Electronic monitoring maximized retention model.** The "electronic monitoring maximized retention model" with respect to the groundfish sector monitoring program, means a program in which all eligible trips are electronically monitored; fish must be handled in view of cameras; allowed discarding must occur at controlled points in view of cameras; all allocated groundfish species stocks must be retained; electronic monitoring is used to verify compliance; and offloads are subject to observation by dockside monitors.
- H. **Groundfish.** "Groundfish" means all demersal species including but not limited to the following:

<b>Common English Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>
Monkfish (Goosefish)	Lophius americanus
American Plaice (Dab)	Hippoglossoides platessoides
Atlantic Cod	Gadus morhua
Atlantic Halibut	Hippoglossus hippoglossus
Atlantic Searobins	Prionotus spp.
Atlantic Tomcod	Microgadus tomcod
Atlantic Wolfish	Anarhichas lupus
Cunner	Tautoglabrus adspersus
Cusk (Tusk)	Brosme brosme
Greenland Halibut	Reinhardtius hippoglossoides
Haddock	Melanogrammus aeglefinus
North Atlantic redfishes	Sabastes spp.
Ocean Pout	acrozoarces americanus
Pollock (Saithe)	Pollachius virens
Red Hake	Urophycis chuss
Redfish	Sabastes marinus
Sandeels (Sand lances)	Ammodytes spp.
Sculpins	Myoxocephalus spp.
Silver Hake(whiting)	Merluccius bilinearis
Summer Flounder (fluke)	Paralichthys dentatus
White Hake	Urophycis tenuis
Windowpane Flounder	Scophthalmus aquosus

Winter Flounder (Lemon sole/Blackback)  
 Witch Flounder (Gray sole)  
 Wolffishes (catfishes)  
 Yellowtail Flounder

Pseudopleuronectes americanus  
 Glyptocephalus cynoglossus  
 Anarhichas spp.  
 Limanda ferruginea

- I. **Marine species.** "Marine species" means all marine animals except lobster, shellfish, marine worms, and elvers.
- J. **Pectoral length.** "Pectoral length" is the measurement taken from the base of the pectoral fin where it joins the fish's body to the tip of the fish's tail.
- K. **Recreational fishing.** "Recreational fishing" means fishing that is not intended to, nor does it result in the barter, trade, or sale of fish.
- L. **Recreational fishing vessel.** A "Recreational fishing vessel" means any vessel from which no groundfish harvest other than recreational fishing, is conducted. Charter and party boats are not considered recreational fishing vessels.
- M. **Regulated species.** "Regulated species" means cod, witch flounder, American plaice, Atlantic halibut, yellowtail flounder, haddock, pollock, winter flounder, windowpane flounder, redfish, ocean pout and white hake for the purposes of this management plan.
- N. **Sink gillnet.** A "Sink Gillnet" is a gillnet that is fished on or near the bottom in the lower third of the water column.
- O. **Territorial waters.** "Territorial waters" means all waters of the State within the rise and fall of the tide seaward to the 3-nautical mile line as shown on the most recently published Federal Government nautical chart, but does not include areas above any fishway or dam when that fishway or dam is the dividing line between tidewater and fresh water.
- P. **Total length.** "Total length" is the measurement taken from the tip of the snout to the tip of the tail.

### 34.02 Methods of Mesh Measurement

#### A. Gillnets

Mesh size of gillnet gear shall be measured by lining up five consecutive knots perpendicular to the float line and, with a ruler or tape measure, measuring ten consecutive measures on the diamond, inside knot to inside knot. The mesh shall be the average of the measurements of ten consecutive measures.

#### B. All other nets

Mesh size for nets other than gillnets, shall be measured with a DMR issued net measure which has been certified for accuracy.

#### C. Square-mesh measurement

Square mesh in the regulated portion of the net is measured by placing the net gauge along the diagonal line that connects the largest opening between opposite corners of the square. The square mesh size is the average of the measurements of 20 consecutive adjacent meshes from the terminus forward along the long axis of the net. The square mesh is measured at least five meshes away from the lacings of the net.

#### D. Diamond-mesh measurements

Diamond mesh in the regulated portion of the net shall be measured in a direction parallel to the long axis of the net. Mesh size is determined by averaging the measurements for a series of 20 consecutive meshes. Mesh measurements must be taken at least five meshes away from the lacings of the net.

### 34.03 Groundfish Spawning Closure

**A. Boothbay and Sheepscot Bay Groundfish Closure**

It shall be unlawful to fish for or take groundfish with any type of gear, or to possess groundfish so taken, from the following described area from May 1 through June 30 of any year:

In Boothbay, Sheepscot Bay, Linnekin Bay and Sheepscot River, in Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties, starting at the Sloop Ledge navigational buoy C "5", then running in a Southerly direction to the navigational buoy at the Sisters N "4S", then running Southeast to the navigational buoy N "2" at Tom Rock; then continuing on a line true South (180 degrees true) approximately 1.8 miles to a point at position 43 42.06'N / 069 43.06'W intersecting a line drawn from the Mile Ledge Bell Buoy R "20ML" to the Bantam Rock Bell R "2"; then continuing in an Northeasterly direction (067 degrees true) along the line from the Mile Ledge Bell Buoy to the Bantam Rock Bell Buoy approximately 4.5 miles to the Bantam Rock Bell; then Northerly to and along the Western shore of Damariscove Island; then to and along the western shore of Fisherman Island to its Northern tip; then Northerly to the Southern tip of Ocean Point on Linnekin Neck.

**B. Maine Groundfish Spawning Closure**

Except for recreational harvest authorized by this chapter, it is illegal to fish for, take, or have in possession groundfish listed under this part during the months of April, May and June. Maine's territorial waters are closed to commercial harvest as follows: All territorial waters west of a line, running 180° magnetic from West Quoddy Head, in Lubec, to the Canadian international border. Commercial ground fishing vessels must have all fishing gear securely stowed and covered when transiting this area during the closed period. The stowage requirements will not apply to vessels secured to or moving between docks or moorings within a harbor.

**GROUNDFISH SPECIES**

**Common English Name**

**Scientific Name**

American Plaice (Dab)	Hippoglossoides platessoides
Atlantic Cod	Gadus morhua
Haddock	Melanogrammus aeglefinus
Ocean Pout	Macrozoarces americanus
Pollock (Saithe)	Pollachius virens
Red Hake	Urophycis chuss
Redfish	Sebastes fasciatus
Silver Hake (whiting)	Merluccius bilinearis
White Hake	Urophycis tenuis
Windowpane Flounder	Scophthalmus aquosus
Winter Flounder (Lemon sole/Blackback)	Pleuronectes americanus
Witch Flounder (Gray sole)	Glyptocephalus cynoglossus
Yellowtail Flounder	Pleuronectes ferrugineus

\*\* See Also Groundfish harvesting and gear restrictions found in Department of Marine Resources Regulations 55.35 and 55.40.

**34.04 Groundfish Gear Restrictions**

Except as provided for Atlantic Halibut, It is unlawful to fish commercially in Maine's territorial waters for any species of groundfish, as defined in Chapter 34.01 (F), except in accordance with the following methods and restrictions:

**A. Otter and beam trawl**

The minimum mesh size for any otter or beam trawl net on a vessel, or used by any vessel fishing in Maine's territorial waters, shall be 6 inches diamond mesh or 6.5 inches square mesh in the body and wings, and 6.5 inches diamond mesh or square mesh in the cod end.

**B. Gill net**

Sink gillnets must have a mesh size of at least 6.5 inches and be labeled with the owner's commercial fishing license number. Gillnet fishermen may not fish more than fifty sink gillnets at one time. Sink gillnets with mesh measuring less than 6.5 inches are illegal and subject to seizure.

C. **Hooks**

The use of hooks on any commercial fishing vessel engaged in tub trawling or long lining shall be 12/0 or greater circle hooks and limited to 250 in number except as provided for Atlantic Halibut in this chapter.

D. **Crucifiers**

The use of de-hookers or "crucifiers" with less than 6-inch spacing between the fairlead rollers is prohibited.

**34.05 Commercial Groundfish Restrictions**

A. **Prohibited Species**

Vessels are prohibited from retaining, killing or landing Ocean Pout, Windowpane Flounder, and Atlantic Wolffish.

B. **Commercial Fishing Size Restrictions**

1. Unless otherwise specified under this chapter, the minimum fish size applies to the whole fish or any part of a fish while possessed on board a vessel and to whole fish only, after landing. Fish or parts of fish must have skin on while possessed on board a vessel and at the time of landing in order to meet minimum size requirements. "Skin on" means the entire portion of the skin normally attached to the portion of the fish or fish parts possessed.

2. **Minimum Fish Sizes (Total Length)**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Size Inches (cm)</b>
American Plaice (dab).....	12 (30.5 cm)
Cod.....	19 (48.3 cm)
Haddock.....	16 (40.7 cm)
Monkfish.....	17 (43.2 cm)
Pollock.....	19 (48.3 cm)
Redfish.....	7 (17.8 cm)
Summer Flounder.....	14 (35.6 cm)
Winter Flounder (lemon sole/blackback).....	12 (30.48 cm)
Witch Flounder (gray sole).....	13 (33.0 cm)
Yellowtail Flounder.....	12 (30.5 cm)

3. **Minimum Size Limit Exceptions**

- (a) Except for Atlantic Halibut, each person aboard a vessel may possess up to 25 lb. of fillets that measure less than the minimum size, if such fillets are from legal-sized fish and are not offered or intended for sale, trade, or barter.
- (b) Vessels fishing exclusively with pot gear may possess multispecies racks used, or to be used, as bait that measure less than the minimum fish size, if there is a receipt for the purchase of those racks on board the vessel.
- (c) **Monkfish.** Monkfish tails may be removed from the fish but must measure at least 11 inches (27.9 cm).
- (d) Vessels participating in the electronic monitoring maximized retention model must retain all fish from each allocated groundfish species, regardless of length, and are therefore exempt from the minimum fish sizes for allocated groundfish species specified in Section

34.05 B(2). Federally permitted Northeast multispecies dealers may possess undersized fish which are landed by vessels participating in the electronic monitoring maximized retention model as long as they clearly identify, mark, or label all containers with fish below the minimum size as containing undersized fish, the fishing vessel from which they were offloaded, and the date of offloading. A receipt must accompany the possession of undersized allocated groundfish originating from the maximized retention model to indicate they were legally obtained. Vessels, or their sector manager, which are participating in the electronic monitoring maximized retention model and plan to land groundfish in Maine must notify Maine DMR when their vessel monitoring plan includes, or removes, the maximized retention model as an electronic monitoring tool and provide a list of Maine dealers which they are authorized to land at as per their vessel monitoring plan.

**C. Commercial Fishing Possession Limits**

**1. Winter Flounder**

It shall be unlawful for persons who do not possess a federal groundfish permit to fish for, take, possess or land more than 500 lbs (226.8 kg) of winter flounder taken from Maine's territorial waters per vessel, per day.

**2. Atlantic Cod**

It shall be unlawful for persons who do not possess a federal groundfish permit to fish for, take, possess or land more than 200 pounds (90.7 kg) of cod taken from Maine's territorial waters per vessel per trip.

**3. Monkfish**

It shall be unlawful for persons who do not possess a federal groundfish permit to fish for, take, possess or land more than 150 lbs (68 kg) of monkfish tails or 498 lbs (225.9 kg) of whole monkfish taken from Maine's territorial waters per vessel per trip.

**4. Summer Flounder**

It shall be unlawful for persons who do not possess a federal groundfish permit to fish for, take, possess or land more than 1,000 pounds of summer flounder taken from Maine's territorial waters per vessel per trip.

When the annual Maine quota for summer flounder is reached it shall be unlawful to fish for, take, or possess summer flounder, (*Paralichthys dentatus*), aboard any vessel within Maine's territorial waters. Public notice will be made in a newspaper, with statewide circulation, when the annual quota for summer flounder has been reached. It is unlawful to land summer flounder in the State of Maine that is in excess of the annual quota established by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Department of Marine Resources.

**34.06 Recreational Groundfish Restrictions**

**A. Prohibited species**

Charter, Party and Recreational vessels and/or recreational fishermen are prohibited from retaining, killing or landing Windowpane flounder, Ocean pout and/or Atlantic Wolffish.

**B. Restrictions on Sale**

It is unlawful to sell, barter, trade, or otherwise transfer for a commercial purpose, or to attempt to sell, barter, trade, or otherwise transfer for a commercial purpose, groundfish caught or landed by charter, party, or recreational fishing vessels.

**C. Recreational Size Limits**

1. Persons aboard charter, party and recreational fishing vessels are subject to the following minimum fish sizes:

<b>Species</b>	<b>Minimum Fish Sizes (TL)</b>	<b>Size Inches (cm)</b>
Cod.....		23 (58.4 cm)
Haddock.....	<del>18 (45.7 cm)</del>	<u>17 (43.2 cm)</u>
American plaice (dab).....		14 (35.6 cm)
Monkfish.....		17 (43.2 cm)
Redfish.....		9 (22.9 cm)
Summer Flounder.....		20 (50.8 cm)
Winter Flounder (blackback).....		12 (30.5 cm)
Witch Flounder (gray sole).....		14 (35.6 cm)
Yellowtail Flounder.....		13 (33.0 cm)

2. **Exceptions**

Vessels may possess fillets less than the minimum size specified, if the fillets are taken from legal-sized fish and are not offered or intended for sale, trade or barter. This exception shall not apply to Atlantic Halibut.

**D. Recreational Limits and Restrictions**

1. **Winter Flounder**

Each person on board a charter, party or recreational fishing vessel may not possess more than 8 Winter Flounder.

2. **Haddock**

Each person on board a charter, party vessel, or recreational fishing vessel may not possess more than 15 haddock per day.

Each person on board a charter, party, or recreational fishing vessel shall comply with the following restrictions:

- (a) For purposes of counting fish, fillets will be converted to whole fish at the place of landing by dividing the fillet number by two. If fish are filleted into a single (butterfly) fillet, such fillet shall be deemed to be from one whole fish.
- (b) Haddock harvested by charter, party, or recreational fishing vessels with more than one person aboard may be pooled in one or more containers. Compliance with the possession limit will be determined by dividing the number of fish on board by the number of persons aboard. If there is a violation of the possession limit on board a vessel carrying more than one person, the owner or operator shall be responsible for the violation.
- (c) Haddock must be stored so as to be readily available for inspection.
- (d) Haddock may not be possessed on board a charter, party or recreational fishing vessel from March 1 through March 31 inclusive.

3. **Summer Flounder**

**Recreational Effort Restrictions: Summer Flounder creel limit and season**

It shall be unlawful to take, catch, kill, or possess more than two (2) Summer Flounder per day.

4. **Cod**

Each person on board a charter, party or recreational fishing vessel may not possess more than 1 cod per day. Cod may not be possessed on board a charter, party, or recreational fishing vessel from November 1 through August 31, inclusive.

**34.07 Atlantic Halibut (*Hippoglossus hippoglossus*)****A. Season for Maine's Territorial Waters**

1. The open season to fish for Atlantic Halibut in Maine's territorial waters shall begin at sunrise May 18th and end at sunset June 13th.
2. Within Maine's territorial waters, it shall be unlawful to fish for Atlantic halibut on Wednesdays and Thursdays. It shall be unlawful to land Atlantic halibut within the State on Wednesdays and Thursdays, except that Federal Northeast multispecies permit holders or recreational fishermen may land Atlantic halibut on Wednesdays and Thursdays provided those halibut are caught in federal waters and are immediately tagged with the appropriate federal commercial landing tag or recreational landing tag.

**B. License Requirements**

1. Commercial halibut fishermen must obtain a Commercial Halibut License. Commercial Halibut License holders must declare the vessel at the time of license issuance or renewal, to which that license holder's tags will be allocated. The license holder may only fish for halibut from the vessel that was declared at the time of license issuance or renewal and to which that license holders' tags were allocated.
2. Recreational fishermen are not required to obtain a Commercial Halibut License to fish for Atlantic Halibut but must declare a vessel for which their recreational landings tags will be assigned.

**C. Size Limit**

1. It shall be illegal to land, sell, or possess any Atlantic Halibut which measures less than 41 inches in total length or for a fish with the head removed, 32 inches in pectoral length. Except for removing the fish's head, Atlantic Halibut must remain intact until reaching the point of sale at a dealer facility or at the consumer's property.

**Exception:** Federally permitted Charter or Party Boats taking passengers for hire may fillet legal size halibut at sea under the following conditions:

- a. Fillets must come from a legal sized Atlantic Halibut;
  - b. Fillets must remain whole with skin left on;
  - c. Atlantic Halibut carcasses must be tagged and retained until the boat has been landed;
  - d. Fillets must match with the Atlantic Halibut carcass.
2. Atlantic Halibut caught at sea which measure less than the minimum legal size, may be tagged with DMR issued research tags and then immediately released.
  3. Atlantic Halibut raised by means of aquaculture shall be exempted from the size limit if accompanied by proper documentation identifying the origin of the fish and verification that the fish are an aquaculture product.

**D. Prohibitions**

1. It shall be illegal to possess or land marine species other than Atlantic Halibut while fishing for Atlantic Halibut aboard commercial vessels in Maine's territorial waters. Other marine species caught while fishing for Atlantic Halibut shall be immediately liberated.
2. It shall be unlawful to transfer Atlantic Halibut between vessels.
3. It shall be illegal to fish for Atlantic Halibut in Maine's territorial waters by any method other than using size 14/0, 15/0 or 16/0 circle hooks.
4. No vessel may fish for Atlantic Halibut using more than 200 circle hooks.
5. Recreational fishermen or commercial fishermen without a Commercial Halibut License may halibut fish, for personal use, using a tub-trawl and are limited to 100 circle hooks per vessel. In addition, recreational fishermen or commercial fishermen without a Commercial Halibut license are limited to no more than 100 hooks per person.
6. No individual may possess more than one type of landing tag per year. In addition, it shall be illegal for more than one type of landing tag to be assigned to any one vessel. The full allotment of landing tags will be issued to individuals one time per year.
7. It shall be illegal to possess a Halibut tag on a vessel that the tag is not registered to.
8. For vessels which have been assigned State commercial landings tags for Atlantic Halibut, it shall be illegal to possess Atlantic Halibut when operating seaward of Maine's territorial waters.

**E. Halibut Gear Marking Requirements**

1. All persons fishing for Atlantic Halibut with Commercial Halibut License in accordance with Chapter 34.07 B-1 must have marking buoys on each end of the trawl clearly labeled with their name and Commercial Halibut License number.
2. All persons recreationally tub trawling for Atlantic Halibut must mark the trawl buoys with their name and the words "Halibut Trawl" or other DMR specified marking.

**F. Total Allowable Catch**

1. Commercial, party, or charter vessels may land no more than 25 Atlantic Halibut per year.
2. Recreational vessels may land no more than 5 Atlantic Halibut per year.

**G. Tagging Requirements**

1. All legal size Atlantic Halibut caught in Maine's coastal waters and intended to be retained by a Commercial Halibut License holder or recreational fisherman shall be immediately tagged with a landing tag approved by the Department of Marine Resources (DMR). Landing tags shall be attached in a manner for which the tag was designed tightly around or through the tail just before the tail fin.
2. Landings tags must remain on the fish until the fish has reached its final destination as a legal-sized fish that is not offered or intended for sale, trade, or barter by a recreational fisherman or prior to retail sale by a Commercial Halibut License holder or Wholesale Seafood Dealer. It is illegal to possess Atlantic Halibut which are not properly tagged. Any person in possession of Atlantic Halibut without a DMR landings tag shall not be in violation of this Chapter if that person is in possession of a bill of lading showing the Atlantic Halibut were lawfully obtained from an origin outside the State of Maine or identified in accordance with the exception for Atlantic Halibut raised by means of aquaculture in Chapter 34.07 C-3. The absence of a bill of lading shall be prima facie evidence that the Atlantic Halibut were landed in Maine i.e., not shipped into Maine.

3. No individual or vessel will be issued more than 25 landing tags per (calendar) year except that Commercial Halibut License holders who also hold a Federal Multispecies Permit shall be exempted from the individual tag limit provided that no one federally permitted vessel is assigned more than 25 landing tags per year.
4. Three types of landing tags may be issued:
  - (a) State Commercial tags will be issued to Commercial Halibut License holders without a Federal permit fishing in Maine's territorial waters.
  - (b) Federal Commercial tags will be issued to Commercial Halibut License holders who possess a Federal multispecies permit authorizing access to Federal waters.
  - (c) Recreational tags will be issued to party/charter or recreational vessels which fish in either Federal or territorial waters.

H. **Observers**

When fishing for Atlantic Halibut, all commercial, recreational, party and charter boat vessels must accept observers aboard their vessels upon request from the DMR or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

I. **Sampling**

Atlantic Halibut fishers may be requested to preserve stomach, gonad, otolith, scale or other biological samples for analyses by DMR and NMFS scientists. Any training necessary for compliance with such a request would be provided by DMR and/or NMFS personnel.

J. **Reporting:** See Chapter 8.20(F) Landings Program.

**34.08 Whiting/Silver Hake (*Merluccius-Bilinearis*) Commercial Effort Restrictions**

A. **Maine Territorial Waters Gear Prohibition and Season**

1. It shall be unlawful for any person to take, harvest, or fish for Whiting in Maine's territorial waters by any method from December 1st through June 30<sup>th</sup>.
  - (a) **Exemption:** A person participating in the northern shrimp fishery may retain Whiting taken as by-catch less than or equal to the amount of shrimp on board, but not to exceed 3,500 pounds. These persons must possess a Commercial Northern Shrimp license issued in accordance with 12 M.R.S. §6804; as well as, a Commercial Pelagic and Anadromous Fishing License in accordance with 12 M.R.S. §6502-A with a Whiting endorsement pursuant to Chapter 34.08 C.
2. No person may take, harvest or fish for Whiting using any grate raised footrope trawl (GRFT) net in Maine's territorial waters.

B. **Coastal Waters Gear Restrictions**

It shall be unlawful to possess aboard a vessel any grate raised footrope trawl (GRFT) net, which has net mesh less than 6.5 inches or cod end mesh which measures less than 2.5-inches. GRFT nets used to fish for or take whiting must comply with the federal regulations specified under 50 CFR §648.80(a)(16). For cod ends comprised of square mesh, measurements shall be taken from within the first 100 bars, counting from the terminus of the net, for vessels greater than 45 feet in length overall, and taken from within the first 50 bars, counting from the terminus of the net, for vessels 45 feet or less in length overall. For cod ends comprised of diamond mesh, measurements shall be taken from within the first 50 meshes, counting from the terminus of the net, for vessels greater than 45 feet in length overall and taken from within the first 25 meshes for vessels 45 feet or less in length overall.

C. **Whiting Endorsement Required**

In order to obtain a Whiting endorsement, GRFT federal exempted Whiting fishery participants must contact the Department of Marine Resources for a gear inspection. Upon satisfactory completion of the gear inspection, the Whiting endorsement will be affixed or applied to the license holder's Maine Commercial Pelagic and Anadromous Fishing License by DMR personnel. The endorsement shall be subject to continued compliance with the gear apparatus and DMR reporting requirements.

**D. Possession Restrictions**

The owner or operator of a vessel participating in the GRFT federal exempted Whiting fishery with a Whiting endorsement from DMR may not possess on board, or land any species of fish, other than a maximum of 7,500 lb (3,402 kg) of Whiting; except for the following incidental species in accordance with 50 CFR §648.80(a)(16)(i)(A): Offshore Hake, Red Hake; Butterfish; Herring; Mackerel; Squid; and Alewife.

**E. Observers**

When fishing for Whiting, all commercial vessels must accept observers aboard their vessels upon request from the DMR or NOAA Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

**F. Reporting requirements:** See Chapter 8.20(Q) Landings Program.

**G. Revocation of Whiting endorsement**

The failure of the license holder to comply with the reporting or observer requirements of this rule shall be grounds for the immediate revocation of the whiting endorsement or, in the discretion of the Commissioner, for a refusal to renew the Whiting endorsement. The Commissioner may revoke or deny renewal of the endorsement in accordance with the following procedures:

1. The Commissioner shall advise the license holder of the decision to revoke or to deny renewal of the Whiting endorsement by certified mail and shall include in the notice a statement of the grounds for the decision.
2. The Commissioner shall advise the license holder of his/her right to request that an adjudicatory hearing be held before the Department in conformity with 5 M.R.S.A., Chapter 375 subchapter IV. The Commissioner shall advise the license holder that the hearing must be requested in writing and that the written request must be received by the Department no later than ten days of receipt by the applicant of the notice, by certified mail, of immediate revocation or non-renewal of the Whiting endorsement.
3. If an adjudicatory hearing is requested, the Commissioner shall schedule a hearing within ten days of the Department's receipt of the written request for hearing, unless a longer period is mutually agreed to in writing.
4. Notice of the hearing date, time, and location shall be given immediately to the license holder.

## **Basis Statement**

On April 2, 2026, the Maine Department of Marine Resources adopted an emergency rule to align with the recreational size limit of haddock adopted by NOAA Fisheries in federal waters. This emergency rule decreased the recreational haddock minimum size limit from 18 inches to 17 inches, allowing additional fishing opportunity while maintaining catch within the recreational sub-ACL. This regular rulemaking will continue the recreational haddock minimum size limit at 17 inches after the expiration of the emergency rule on July 2, 2026.

## Summary of Comments

Notice of the proposed rulemaking appeared on May 6, 2026, posted to DMR's website and also printed in the five major daily newspapers as published by the Secretary of State; and electronic messages were sent to individuals who subscribe to DMR's rulemaking notices and sent to industry members who provided their email address to DMR. A hybrid public hearing was held on May 26, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. in-person at DMR's Augusta office and offered remotely via Microsoft Teams. No members of the public attended the public hearing. The comment period closed on June 5, 2026.

### Written Comments Received via Email

The comments below are organized by the date they were received.

#### **June 2, 2026 from Bob Humphrey on behalf of Sportsman's Alliance of Maine**

re: : Notice of Agency Rulemaking Proposals Chapter 43 - Bluefish Recreational Bag Limit; Chapter 52 - Mackerel Recreational Bag Limit; Chapter 34.06 - Haddock Recreational Size Limit

On behalf of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine's (SAM), I am writing to express our support for the following proposed regulation changes:

Chapter 43 - increase the bluefish possession limit from 3 fish to 5 fish;  
Chapter 52 - increase the mackerel possession limit from 20 fish to 25 fish;  
Chapter 34.06 - decrease the recreational haddock minimum size limit from 18 inches to 17 inches.

These modifications will align State regulations with recent changes adopted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). They are based on the best available science and will allow additional fishing opportunity while maintaining catch limits within management plan objectives.

Respectfully,  
Bob Humphrey  
Vice President, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine  
Chair, SAM Fisheries Committee  
727 Poland Range Road  
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(207) 688-4966  
bob.humphrey@samofmaine.org

#### **June 2, 2026 from Dan Nash**

I like the change in size limit for haddock from 18 inches to 17 inches.

Dan Nash

#### **June 2, 2026 from Amy Pickering**

Hi  
I would comment to leave the existing regulations alone to not hurt the future population  
Amy

### DMR's response:

DMR notes the liberalization of the Gulf of Maine (GOM) haddock size limit is in response to the 2024 management track stock assessment and will ensure the sub-ACL is harvested but not exceeded. The stock assessment estimated the GOM haddock spawning stock biomass to be 194% of the biomass target. Additionally, in recent years, less than 60% of the GOM haddock sub-ACL has been taken. Reducing the size limit to 17-inches is projected to allow the catch to increase while remaining below the sub-ACL. This will ensure the biomass remains in a healthy state and allow the sub-ACL to be better utilized.

STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

**Rulemaking Fact Sheet**

(see 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(1))

**Agency:** Department of Marine Resources

**Name, Address, Telephone Number, and Email Address of Agency Contact Person:**

Name: Aurora Burgess

Address: Department of Marine Resources, 21 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0021

Telephone: 207-592-0295

Email: DMR.rulemaking@maine.gov

**Chapter Number and Rule Title:** Chapter 34 Groundfish: Haddock Recreational Size Limit

**Type of Rule:** Routine Technical

**Statutory Authority:** 12 M.R.S. §6171

**Public Hearing(s):** Tuesday, May 26, 2026, 4:30 p.m., DMR's August Office and remotely via Microsoft Teams

**Comment Deadline(s):** Friday, June 5, 2026

**Principal Reason(s) or Purpose for Proposing this Rule** [see 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(1)(A)]:

This rulemaking modifies the recreational size limit of haddock to align with recent changes adopted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under NOAA. This rulemaking decreases the recreational haddock minimum size limit from 18 inches to 17 inches, allowing additional fishing opportunity while maintaining catch within the recreational sub- annual catch limits (ACL). This rulemaking maintains consistency with federal regulations (50 CFR Part 648 [Docket No. 260304-0064]).

**Is Material Incorporated by Reference into the Rule** [see 5 M.R.S. § 8056(2-A)]? No

**Analysis and Expected Operation of the Rule** [see 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(1)(B) & (D)]:

This rule is expected to allow additional fishing opportunity, while maintaining catch within the recreational sub- annual catch limits (ACL), through a decrease in the minimum size limit.

**Brief Summary of Relevant Information Considered During Development of the Rule (including up to 3 primary sources relied upon)**[see 5 M.R.S. §§ 8057-A(1)(E) & 8063-B]:

This rule considered the final rule 50 CFR Part 648 [Docket No. 260304-0064] issued by NOAA Fisheries which set fishing years 2025-2026 haddock recreational fishery management measures.

**Estimated Fiscal Impact of the Rule** [see 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(1)(C)]:

Enforcement of this amendment would not require additional activity in the agency. Existing enforcement personnel will monitor compliance during routine patrols.

**FOR EXISTING RULES WITH FISCAL IMPACT OF \$1 MILLION OR MORE, ALSO INCLUDE:**

**Economic Impact, Whether or Not Quantifiable in Monetary Terms** [see 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(2)(A)]:

N/A

**Individuals, Major Interest Groups and Types of Businesses Affected and How They Will Be Affected** [see 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(2)(B)]:

N/A

**Benefits of the Rule** [see 5 M.R.S. § 8057-A(2)(C)]:

N/A

*Note: If necessary, additional pages may be used.*

