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Notice of Public Hearing and Comment Period:

Recreational Black Sea Bass, Recreational Gulf of Maine Haddock, and Commercial and Recreational Atlantic Mackerel Limits

Under the provisions of G.L. c. 30A, and pursuant to the authorities found at G.L. c. 130, §§ 17A and 21, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is taking public comment on a series of recently enacted emergency regulations at 322 CMR 6.00. These emergency regulations set the Commonwealth's recreational fishing limits for black sea bass and Gulf of Maine haddock and commercial and recreational limits for Atlantic mackerel consistent with recent actions taken by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. Full text of the regulations may be found on [DMF's website](#) along with additional background information.

Schedule for Public Comment Period and Hearing

DMF will accept written public comment through 5PM on Friday, May 22, 2026. Please submit written comments by email to marine.fish@mass.gov to the attention of Director McKiernan. DMF will also host a virtual public hearing on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 at 6PM. To attend this virtual public hearing, please register [here](#).

Public Hearing Proposals

1. Recreational Gulf of Maine Haddock (322 CMR 6.03). Reduce the size limit from 18" to 17". The existing open season (April 1–February 28) and bag limit (15-fish per angler) are maintained.
2. Recreational Black Sea Bass (322 CMR 6.28). Establish an open fishing season of May 16 through October 14 with a per angler bag limit of 4 fish during May 16–August 31 and 2 fish during September 1–October 14, and a minimum size of 16".
3. Atlantic Mackerel (322 CMR 6.44).
 - a. Increase the recreational per angler bag limit from 20 fish to 50 fish for anglers onboard a for-hire vessel during a for-hire trip and 25 fish for all other anglers.
 - b. Increase the commercial possession limit from 5,000 pounds reduced to 2,500 pounds when 80% of quota is taken to: 20,000 pounds reduced to 5,000 pounds when 1,100 metric tons of the quota remains and 2,500 pounds when 220 metric tons of the quota remains.

Initial Small Business Impact Statement

(As required by M.G.L. c. 30A §§ 2, 3 & 5)

CMR No: 322 CMR 6.00

Estimate of the Number of Small Businesses Impacted by the Regulation: For 2025, DMF issued 895 for-hire permits and 2,522 Atlantic mackerel permits. Each of these permit holders represents a small business that may be impacted by these regulations.

- **Will small businesses have to create, file, or issue additional reports?**
No. This rule adjusts the state's fishing limits for recreational black sea bass, cod, haddock, and mackerel and commercial mackerel for the 2026 Fishing Year (May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027). This will not result in additional paperwork or reporting.
- **Will small businesses have to implement additional recordkeeping procedures?**
No. This rule adjusts the state's fishing limits for recreational black sea bass, cod, haddock, and mackerel and commercial mackerel for the 2026 Fishing Year (May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027). This will not result in additional record keeping.
- **Will small businesses have to provide additional administrative oversight?**
No. This rule adjusts the state's fishing limits for recreational black sea bass, cod, haddock, and mackerel and commercial mackerel for the 2026 Fishing Year (May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027). This will not result in additional administrative oversight.
- **Will small businesses have to hire additional employees in order to comply with the proposed regulation?**
No. This rule adjusts the state's recreational fishing limits for recreational black sea bass, cod, haddock, and mackerel and commercial mackerel for the 2026 Fishing Year (May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027). This will not result in having to hire additional employees for purposes of compliance.
- **Does compliance with the regulation require small businesses to hire other professionals (e.g. a lawyer)**
No. This rule adjusts the state's recreational fishing limits for recreational black sea bass, cod, haddock, and mackerel and commercial mackerel for the 2026 Fishing Year (May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027). This will not result in having to hire professional services for purposes of compliance.
- **Does the regulation require small businesses to purchase a product or make any other capital investments in order to comply with the regulation?**
No. This rule adjusts the state's recreational fishing limits for recreational black sea bass, cod, haddock, and mackerel and commercial mackerel for the 2026 Fishing Year (May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027). This will not require capital investment.
- **Are performance standards more appropriate than design/operational standards to accomplish the regulatory objective?**

(Performance standards express requirements in terms of outcomes, giving the regulated party flexibility to achieve regulatory objectives and design/operational standards specify exactly what actions regulated parties must take.)

No. Not applicable. The prescribed regulations are designed to complement federal and interstate actions consistent with federal law at 16 U.S.C. 1856 and 16 U.S.C. 5100.

- **Do any other regulations duplicate or conflict with the proposed regulation?**

No. There are no other duplicative or conflicting state regulations.

- **Does the regulation require small businesses to cooperate with audits, inspections or other regulatory enforcement activities?**

No. All audits and inspections are done in accordance with M.G.L. c. 130. No additional inspections are required under this emergency amendment.

- **Does the regulation require small businesses to provide educational services to keep up to date with regulatory requirements?**

No. This rule adjusts the state's recreational fishing limits for recreational black sea bass, cod, haddock, and mackerel and commercial mackerel for the 2026 Fishing Year (May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027). This will not result in having to provide educational services.

- **Is the regulation likely to deter the formation of small businesses in Massachusetts?**

No. Recreational fishing limits are one of a number of limiting factors that may impact the formation of new for-hire fishing businesses in Massachusetts. Accordingly, this action alone does not discourage or encourage the formation of new for-hire businesses.

- **Is the regulation likely to encourage the formation of small businesses in Massachusetts?**

No. Recreational fishing limits are one of a number of limiting factors that may impact the formation of new for-hire fishing businesses in Massachusetts. Accordingly, this action alone will not discourage or encourage the formation of new for-hire businesses.

- **Does the regulation provide for less stringent compliance or reporting requirements for small businesses?**

No. Not applicable. The prescribed regulations are designed to complement federal and interstate actions consistent with federal law at 16 U.S.C. 1856 and 16 U.S.C. 5100.

- **Does the regulation establish less stringent schedules or deadlines for compliance or reporting requirements for small businesses?**

No. Not applicable. The prescribed regulations are designed to complement federal and interstate actions consistent with federal law at 16 U.S.C. 1856 and 16 U.S.C. 5100.

- **Did the agency consolidate or simplify compliance or reporting requirements for small businesses?**

No. Not applicable. The prescribed regulations are designed to complement federal and interstate actions consistent with federal law at 16 U.S.C. 1856 and 16 U.S.C. 5100.

- **Can performance standards for small businesses replace design or operational standards without hindering delivery of the regulatory objective?**

No. Not applicable. The prescribed regulations are designed to complement federal and interstate actions consistent with federal law at 16 U.S.C. 1856 and 16 U.S.C. 5100.

- **Are there alternative regulatory methods that would minimize the adverse impact on small businesses?**

No. Not applicable. The prescribed regulations are designed to complement federal and interstate actions consistent with federal law at 16 U.S.C. 1856 and 16 U.S.C. 5100.