



MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

June 2017



➤ FISHERIES MANAGEMENT, MONITORING & RESEARCH:

◆ ASMFC Management.

To recap the ongoing recreational black sea bass saga, we left off in last quarter’s report with northern region states being in favor of remaining at status quo measures even though preliminary Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) harvest estimates released shortly after the February board meeting that indicated the 2016 harvest had exceeded the upwardly revised harvest target, resulting in a 23% overage. The estimates indicated that the November-December (wave 6) coastwide harvest was almost 10 times what was projected, with New York accounting for about 82% of that estimated harvest. Final MRIP estimates were released during the ASFMC spring meeting week and were slightly smaller than the preliminary estimates, but not much smaller. In spite of measures intended to be progressively more restrictive, Connecticut’s harvest of black sea bass has generally increased over the past four years:

Year	Harvest, lbs.
2013	262,392
2014	586,113
2015	495,675
2016	914,014

The Board considered Technical Committee (TC) analysis of the 2016 harvest estimates and the uncertainty around those harvest estimates in relation to the 2017 recreational harvest limit (RHL) and the efficacy of implementing more restrictive measures for wave 6 to reduce harvest. The board also considered the notions that high recent harvests have been driven by the 2011 year class that has now been fished down, and that there may be an unaccounted for bias in the MRIP data due to the state takeover of the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey portion of MRIP (state samplers may be getting lower interview refusal rates). **In the end, the board voted to impose a 5-fish possession limit for black sea bass in wave 6 for the states of Rhode Island through New Jersey, but otherwise maintained all other management measures from 2016.** This will affect the CT party/charter boat fleet this year, which presently has an 8-fish possession limit.

In addition, there had been some ongoing effort within the Northern Region **Black Sea Bass** Working Group to consider some changes in state regulations to equalize season length within the region. Since regional management was instituted in 2012, there has been divergence in recreational measures, principally season length, for the states within our region and this has become a point of concern for some of the states. Connecticut now has the longest season with 245 days, and Massachusetts has the shortest with 103 days. Also, Connecticut’s black sea bass harvest has risen from a relatively low level to 914,014 lbs. during that period as our previous years’ management measure changes have underperformed in constraining harvest.



MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

June 2017



Since late last year, Connecticut has been getting pressure from the other states to equalize its season length with the other states. Now, instead of managing the region via the workgroup, a more concerted management action via an addendum has been initiated. This addendum will include approaches with uniform regulations (e.g. season lengths) and other alternatives to the current north/south regional delineation (MA-NJ/DE-NC).

◆ At the spring ASFMC meeting, the **Summer Flounder**, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board accepted New Jersey's request to *consider* a proposal for conservation-equivalent management measures for the 2017 summer flounder recreational fishery. Addendum XXVIII to the fishery management plan (FMP), which was approved February 2, 2017, **required CT, NY and NJ to implement identical measures that would result in a collective 33% reduction in harvest from 2016 levels**. Because fish in NJ waters are somewhat smaller than fish further to the north, NJ contends that the state would suffer a disproportionate impact from a 3 fish, 19 inch, and 128-day season and has strongly opposed those measures. In developing an alternative proposal, NJ took a part conventional and part unconventional approach in making its case that their proposed measures were "conservation equivalent". Part of NJ's justification depended on a conventional approach of shortening the season to 104 days, but opted to keep the minimum size at 18 inches instead of 19 inches. This netted them about a 21% reduction in harvest – short of the required 33%. To span that gap, NJ took an unconventional approach of including in their calculations the expected difference in dead discards between Addendum XXVIII measures and their proposal. Their approach also included an unquantifiable assumption that the reduction in the discard mortality rate would be reduced from 10% to 8% by a proposed educational outreach campaign that focused on proper handling and releasing of fish. On a May 22 conference call, the board did not accept the proposal, and on June 1, ASFMC's Interstate Fishery Management Policy Board voted to find NJ out of compliance with the FMP. Upon receipt of a letter from ASFMC to the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary has 30 days to render a finding on whether or not the state failed to carry out its responsibility under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. If the Secretary finds that they did not, the Secretary can declare a moratorium on summer flounder in NJ waters.

◆ The Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board also reviewed the **Summer Flounder** Comprehensive Amendment being developed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC). This amendment addresses issues in the commercial fishery including permits and latent effort, commercial allocation, and landings flexibility. Staff worked through the Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) and working groups to draft alternatives for each issue, drawing from comments received during the amendment scoping process. ASFMC and MAFMC staff will convene the Fishery Management Action Team and working groups during the summer to continue development of draft alternatives ahead of the Board and Council's joint meeting in August.



MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

June 2017



◆ The Commission's **Atlantic Striped Bass** Management Board considered whether or not to advance Draft Addendum V to Amendment 6 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass forward for public comment. The addendum was largely initiated to address high discard rates in the Chesapeake Bay recreational fishery. It considered liberalization of regulations to bring fishing mortality to the target based on the findings of the 2016 assessment update. The Draft Addendum proposed measures aimed to increase total removals (commercial and recreational) by approximately 10% relative to 2015 to achieve the fishing mortality target in 2017. However, 2016 harvest estimates increased without changing regulations and fish from the 2011 year class, which was the largest recruitment event since 2004, will become increasingly available to ocean fisheries in the coming years. This could possibly result in further increases to harvest along the coast. The Board also expressed concern that changing the management program could result in fishing mortality exceeding the target. Consequently, the **board decided to wait until the release of the results of the 2018 benchmark stock assessment before it considers making any changes to the management program.**

◆ The ASFMC **Tautog** Management Board approved Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Tautog for public comment. **A Connecticut public hearing for the amendment is scheduled for June 26 at 7:00 pm at the Old Lyme Marine Headquarters.** The 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicated that for the Long Island Sound region, the stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring. The NY Bight assessment (NY/NJ) reached the same conclusion for tautog in that area, while tautog assessments to the north and south suggest sustainable fishing rates and acceptable biomass levels. **The amendment will require CT and NY to implement measures for LIS that constitute at least a 50% probability of achieving the target regional fishing mortality rate.** For the LIS region, this will mean measures that will reduce commercial and recreational harvest by 47.2%. The management measures proposed include an increase in the minimum size, reduction in the bag limit and season adjustments. There is also an alternative that includes a slot limit. The schedule is for the board to vote for final approval at the August meeting for implementation in 2018.

ASFMC public hearings concerning **American lobster** were held on March 21 and 27 to gather input on Addendum XXV of the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan. The objective of the addendum is to address the continued recruitment failure of lobster in the southern New England stock. The addendum proposed to increase egg production with targets ranging from 0% (status quo) to 60%, and identified management measures to be used to achieve the target. **Industry sentiment overwhelmingly opted for status quo and voiced their opposition to any management measures that would include a minimum size (gauge) increase.** At its May 8 and 9 meeting, the Lobster Management Board adopted a 5% egg increase target that could be achieved by changes to the minimum and/or maximum gauge size, closed seasons



MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

June 2017



and actively fished trap reductions. The Marine Fisheries Program, in collaboration with the NY DEC and the Area 6 (LIS) Lobster Conservation and Management Team (industry advisors) is refining management measure options that include a reduction in the maximum gauge and adjustments to the closed season.

◆ The Marine Fisheries Program also hosted an ASFMC public hearing on March 20th to get public input on Addendum XXIX to the Summer Flounder, **Scup** and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. The Draft Addendum proposes shortening the length of the commercial scup summer period and extending length of the winter period(s) to better allocate the commercial winter period quota, which has been under-harvested since 2011. The fishery is presently under a coastwide quota from January 1 through April 30 (Winter I) and November 1 through December 31 (Winter II). During the Summer Period, the fishery is under state-by-state quotas, and the quota allocation for each period is not being altered. **At the CT hearing industry opposed, for market reasons, any of the options and preferred status quo.** They were concerned about high landings and low price during the inshore period of the fishery. However, at the May 10 meeting, the board approved a motion adding the month of October to the Winter II period, thereby shortening the Summer Period.



Local Fishing Legend Dave Simpson with his Trophy Catch & Release Summer Flounder



MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

June 2017



◆ In March 2017 the department hired Tommy Seda as the new vessel captain for the R/V John Dempsey. Tommy brings to the Marine Fisheries Program enthusiasm and years of experience both as crew and captain of a number of tug boats and educational sailing vessels, including the *Amistad*. Tommy has considerable knowledge in navigating the waters of Long Island Sound and skill in performing routine maintenance of vessels and marine diesel engines. We are excited to welcome him to the program!

The Dempsey underwent a number of scheduled and unexpected repairs this spring. Upon haul out for a routine U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) vessel safety examination, it was discovered the cutlass bearing needed to be replaced and the rudder box needed to be serviced. While the vessel was in dry dock it was also necessary to have a number of welding repairs made to metal handrails, starboard door hinge, the engine discharge pipe and the stern tube. These repairs were integral to the vessel's safe operation and were required to meet the USCG safety standards and maintain the vessel's USCG Certificate of Inspection.

The hydraulics on the vessel also required a badly needed overhaul. Many of the mechanisms associated with the hydraulic system were replaced including the winch drum shafts, motors, rams, net reel motor and controls. The new engine on the R/V Dempsey is also scheduled for a routine marine engine survey after reaching five thousand hours last winter. This survey will take place in July.

These repairs took six weeks to complete and unfortunately impacted the spring trawl survey and limited the sampling capability of the water quality survey. However, the R/V John Dempsey is back on the water conducting the June water quality survey and the June trawl survey is scheduled to begin next week.





MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

June 2017

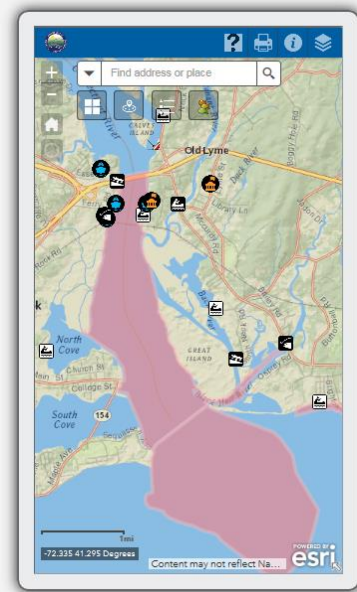
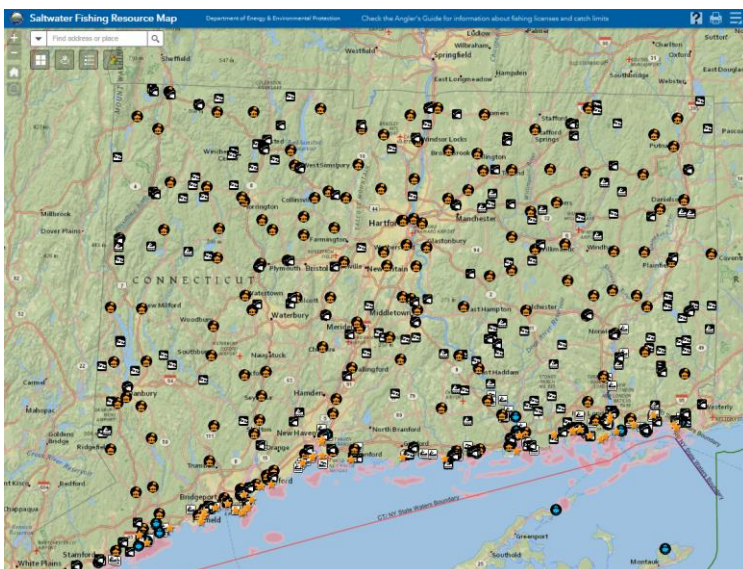


◆ **New Saltwater Fishing Resource Maps are now available.** The latest versions of the two new Saltwater Fishing Resource Maps are now available on the DEEP website. (www.ct.gov/deep/saltwaterfishingresourcemap)

These new maps, created by customizing ESRI ArcGIS Online web app templates, were created to update existing information on fishing resources available to the public, and also to be accessible on mobile devices. **Both maps (as seen in the image below) show sportsmen licensing agents, bait and tackle shops, boat launches, enhanced shore opportunity sites, crabbing sites and popular areas for fishing in the sound.** The first map, called the “All-in-one Map”, shows all the data at once and is best viewed on a desktop or laptop. The second map, the “Storybook Map”, breaks the information down into specific tabs and is easily viewed on a mobile device.

The Popular Places to Fish layer of the maps may be of particular interest to the anglers of Long Island Sound. **This layer shows areas along the Sound that are known as good fishing spots and clicking on the areas will also show what types of fish have historically been found there.** Development of these maps and the information within them is still ongoing. DEEP staff are making updates to the party/charter boat information for the map through an email survey that will be sent out to current charter boat license holders. Additionally, DEEP staff are looking to update the popular places to fish section of the map. This section was compiled using information from DEEP staff but needs input from anglers around the state, particularly those with local knowledge of the western end of the Sound.

If you are an avid angler and would like to contribute your fishing knowledge to the maps, please call **860-434-6043** or email <mailto:deep.marine.fisheries@ct.gov> to find out how you can get involved.



Screen shots of the new Saltwater Fishing Resource Map apps staff developed using ArcGIS Online. The “All-in-one” version on left is better suited to desktop browsers while the “Storybook” version on the right is designed to be more mobile device friendly.

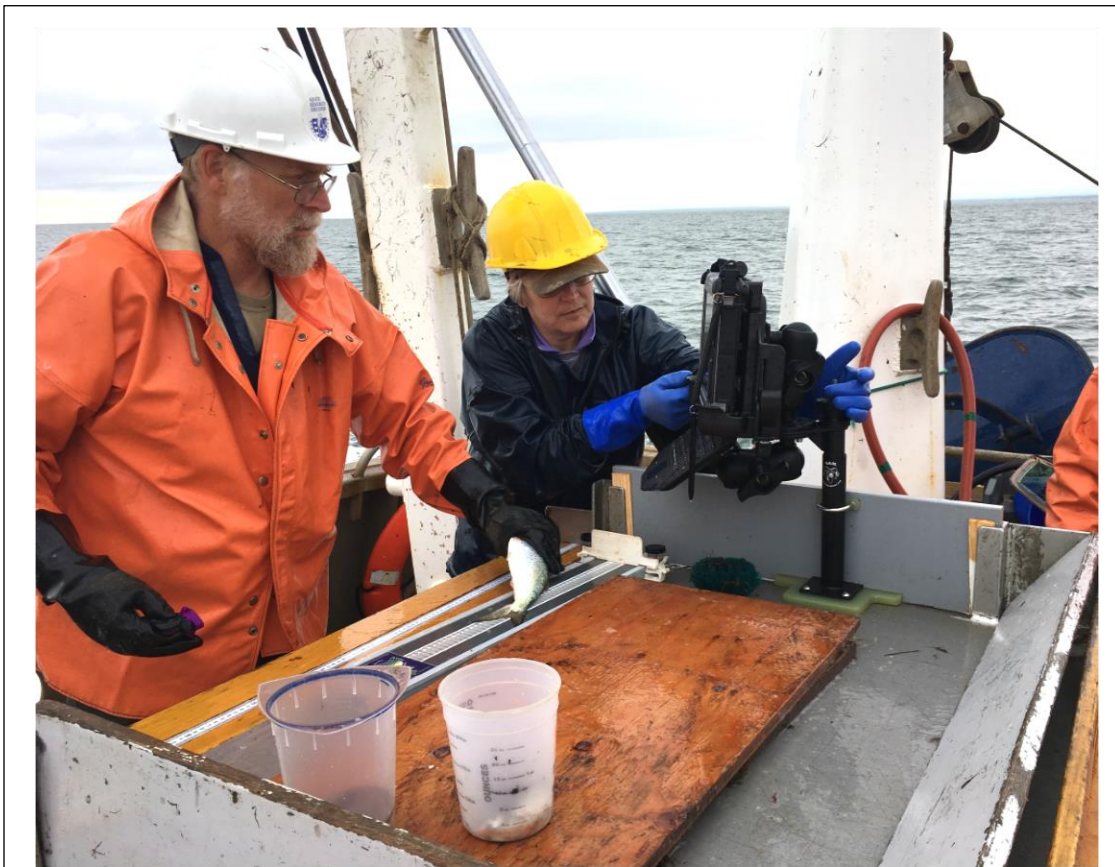


MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

March 2017



◆ **Update on new electronic data acquisition system for Long Island Sound Trawl Survey:** Parts of the new system were tested during the abbreviated May 2017 trawl survey. A tablet was set-up to record information at the weighing station and one measuring station (tablet and measuring board) was set up on the sorting table (as shown in photo below). There is still more work to be done to develop additional hardware and software components of the system but initial results are encouraging!



Pete Aarrestad(left), Director of the CT DEEP Fisheries Division, participated in testing of a new electronic measuring board while Deb Pacileo (right), Fisheries Biologist, prepares the ruggedized tablet running a Beta version of the FEED BioAPP to record the next species to be measured during the May 2017 LIS Trawl Survey onboard the R/V John Dempsey.



MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

March 2017



➤ MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHING:

MARINE RECREATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAM (MRIP)

◆ 2016, MRIP Total Catch estimate for Connecticut (numbers of fish).

SPECIES	TOTAL CATCH	PSE
BLUEFISH	651313	14.6
DOGFISH SHARKS	210935	41.8
OTHER SHARKS	560	82.8
SKATES/RAYS	117864	32.7
FRESHWATER CATFISHES	9836	58.1
ATLANTIC COD	32135	39
POLLOCK	1574	67.1
DOLPHINS	248	106.4
KINGFISHES	12336	70.2
OTHER DRUM	1428	100.3
WEAKFISH	2794	73.1
OTHER FLOUNDERS	588	59.2
SUMMER FLOUNDER	1323071	16.5
WINTER FLOUNDER	650	78.7
HERRINGS	395265	20.2
OTHER FISHES	16535	60.4
SCUP	2611219	14.7
PUFFERS	210	99.9
SCULPINS	489	88.1
BLACK SEA BASS	2024207	18
SEAROBINS	1250487	17.7
STRIPED BASS	669722	21.3
WHITE PERCH	5947	66.7
TOADFISHES	1402	66.3
ATLANTIC MACKEREL	463	90.7
LITTLE TUNNY/ATLANTIC BONITO	32327	37.1
OTHER TUNAS/MACKERELS	12674	63.7
CUNNER	95531	47.2
TAUTOG	1098480	30.9
	10580290	



MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

March 2017



◆ 2016, MRIP Harvest estimate for Connecticut (numbers of fish).

SPECIES	Total Harvest	PSE
BLUEFISH	311250	22.1
DOGFISH SHARKS	2741	89.2
OTHER SHARKS	0	.
SKATES/RAYS	0	.
FRESHWATER CATFISHES	0	.
ATLANTIC COD	20318	53
POLLOCK	245	88.1
DOLPHINS	248	106.4
KINGFISHES	8643	88.6
OTHER DRUM	0	.
WEAKFISH	1179	108.1
OTHER FLOUNDERS	8	46.9
SUMMER FLOUNDER	217806	18.3
WINTER FLOUNDER	33	100
HERRINGS	332878	23
OTHER FISHES	9620	74.5
SCUP	823832	26
PUFFERS	0	.
SCULPINS	0	.
BLACK SEA BASS	435624	16.2
SEAROBINS	33806	45.6
STRIPED BASS	48830	23.4
WHITE PERCH	3514	101.4
TOADFISHES	0	.
ATLANTIC MACKEREL	444	94.5
LITTLE TUNNY/ATLANTIC BONITO	166	93
OTHER TUNAS/MACKERELS	4844	99.4
CUNNER	52	91.5
TAUTOG	165315	38.1
	2421396	



MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

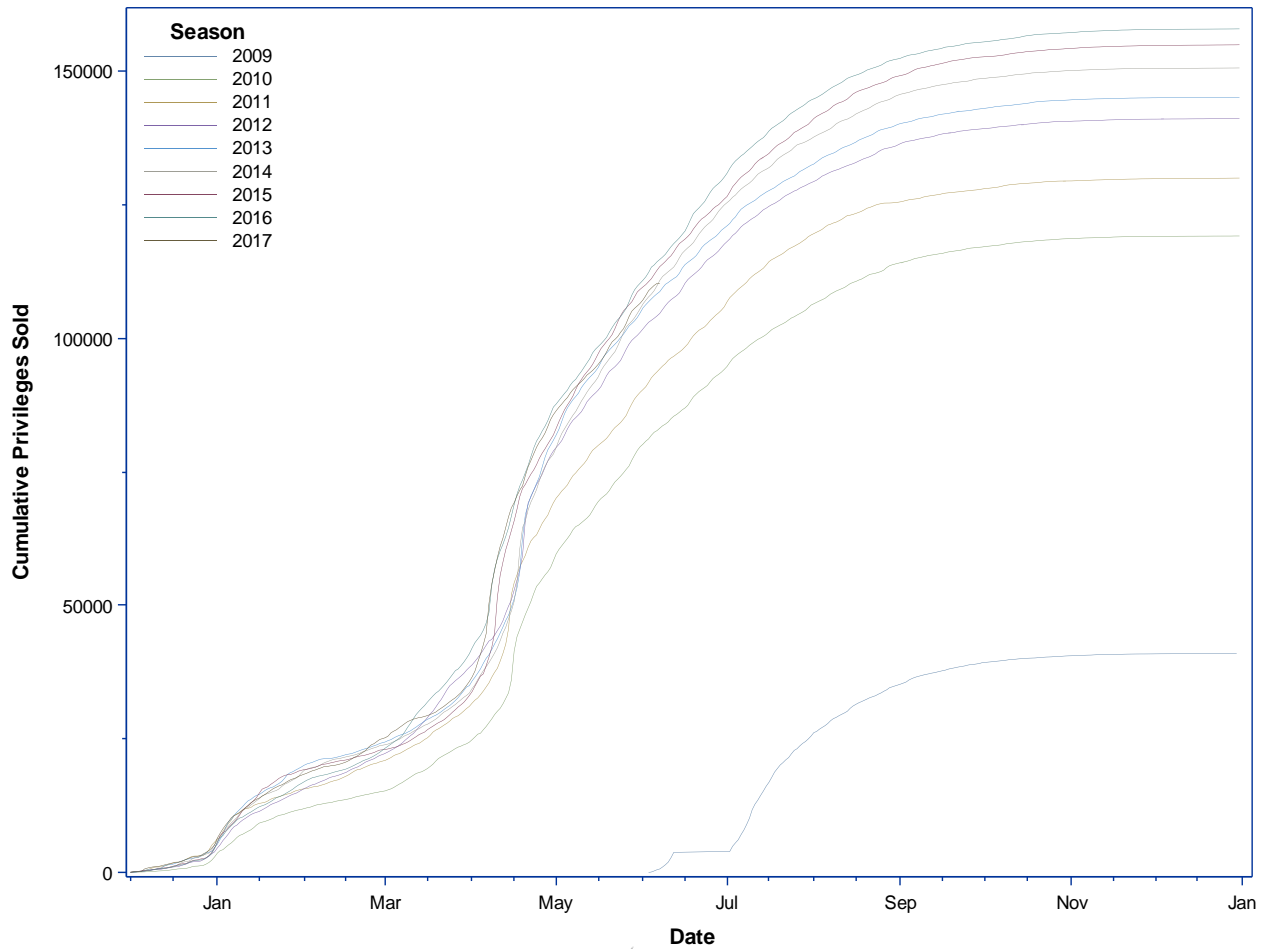
March 2017



➤ MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHERIES – MARINE FISHING LICENSES:

◆ Growth in marine fishing license sales in 2010 - 2017.

2017 Marine Licenses issued through JUNE 7, 2017.





MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

March 2017



Marine Waters Fishing Licenses, 2015 – 2017. Licenses by Type

Privilege Type	Season		
	2015	2016	2017
10195 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Code 9 (Intellect Disabled)	427	445	328
10196 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Code 5 (Blind)	83	82	63
10197 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Type 17 (Handicapped)	511	505	384
1296 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic	18,301	18,752	6,998
1297 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic (Non-Res)	2,870	2,996	856
1337 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Age 65 Plus	31,251	33,015	26,416
1345 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, 1-day	802	733	81
1346 - All Waters Fishing Lic	65,988	67,254	49,744
1347 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic	448	440	302
1348 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic	17,185	16,043	15,647
1349 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Arch Deer / Small Game Lic	1,813	1,948	3,200
1350 - AW Fish Lic / Fa SS (Fa Hunt; S/R PL Deer; PL Sp Trky)	1,114	1,243	.
1351 - AW Fish Lic / Archery SS (Arch Deer / Sm Gm; PL Sp Trky)	1,001	1,050	.
1352 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, 3-day (Non-Res)	1,377	1,491	154
1353 - All Waters Fishing Lic (Non-Res)	1,519	1,702	1,291
1354 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic (Non-Res)	138	142	114
1355 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic (Non-Res)	25	21	12
1475 - AW Fish Lic / Fa SS Lic (Fa Hunt; S/R/Mz PL Deer; PL Sp Trky)	2,059	1,938	.
1476 - AW Fish Lic / Fs SS (Fa Hunt; Mig Duck Stmp; Hip Pmt)	1,288	1,095	.
1922 - Connecticut Bonus Striped Bass Voucher	1,927	2,214	2,229
1953 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic	376	334	307
1954 - AW Fish Lic / Fa SS (Fa Hunt; S/R PL Deer; PL Sp Trky, 16-17)	49	53	.
1955 - AW Fish Lic / Fa SS (Fa Hunt; Mig Duck Stmp; Hip Pmt, 16-17)	61	43	.
1957 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic (16-17)	368	355	116
1958 - All Waters Fishing Lic (16-17)	2,778	2,783	1,877
1959 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, 1-day (16-17)	20	24	6
1960 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic (16-17)	9	6	7
1962 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Arch Deer / Small Game Lic (16-17)	52	9	72
1964 - AW Fish Lic / Archery SS (Arch Deer / Sm Gm; PL Sp Trky, 16-17)	28	48	.
1965 - AW Fish Lic / Fa SS Lic (Fa Hunt; S/R/Mz PL Deer; PL Sp Trky, 16-17))	46	39	.
2023 - Free One-Day Sport Fishing License - 1st	500	578	77
2024 - Free One-Day Sport Fishing License - 2nd	533	544	.
Total	154,947	157,925	110,281



MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

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➤ NOTICES TO FISHERMEN:

- 6/5/2017 **[Notice of ASMFC Public Hearing on Tautog \(Blackfish\)](#)**
 The DEEP Marine Fisheries Program is hosting a public hearing of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to gather input on Draft Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Tautog. (N17-10)
Public Hearing to be held June 26, 2017
Public comment due by July 14, 2017
- 5/17/2017 **[Notice to Lobster and Conch Pot Fishermen](#)**
 Posted on the DEEP website are maps showing the locations of CT DEEP monthly trawl survey sites to be sampled during 2017 from the research vessel, John Dempsey.
- 5/5/2017 **[2017 Commercial Fishery Possession Limits](#)**
 A number of possession limits are now in effect for Connecticut's commercial fisheries. (N17-09)
- 4/28/2017 **[ASMFC Lobster Management Area 6 Lobster Conservation Management Team Meeting](#)**
 On May 8 and May 9 the ASMFC American Lobster Management Board will be meeting to address draft Addendum XXV to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan. To assure consistency between New York and Connecticut waters in LMA6, a meeting has been scheduled. (N17-08)
Meeting to be held May 17, 2017
- 4/6/2017 **[Commercial Fishery Possession Limits](#)**
 Effective 0001 hours, Sunday, April 9, 2017, the commercial possession limit for the commercial harvest of summer flounder will be reduced to 50 pounds. (N17-07)

➤ PUBLIC OUTREACH:

◆ 2017
**CONNECTICUT
 MARINE
 RECREATIONAL
 FISHING
 REGULATION
 SIGNS AVAILABLE
 IN COLOR**

The new design features English, Spanish and Chinese languages and an intuitive visual format more readily understood regardless of English reading proficiency (see next page).





MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT

March 2017



2017 MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHING REGULATIONS

A Marine Waters Fishing License is required

	Minimum Length Longitud mínimo 最小長度 inches/pulgadas / 英寸	Daily Limit Limite diario 每天魚量限制 魚	Open Season Temporada abierto 開放季節 mm/dd - 月/日
STRIPED BASS (No spearing)	28	1	1/1 - 12/31
BLUEFISH	—	10	1/1 - 12/31
TAUTOG (BLACKFISH)	16	2 7/1 - 8/31 4	4/1 - 4/30 7/1 - 8/31 10/10 - 12/6
SCUP (PORGY)*	10	30	5/1 - 12/31
SUMMER FLOUNDER (FLUKE)*	19	3	5/17 - 9/21
WINTER FLOUNDER	12	2	4/1 - 12/31
BLACK SEA BASS <small>Regulations may change. See www.ct.gov/deep/saltwaterfishing</small>	15	5	5/1 - 12/31
WEAKFISH	16	1	1/1 - 12/31
HICKORY SHAD	—	6	1/1 - 12/31
WHITE PERCH	7	30	1/1 - 12/31
MENHADEN (BUNKER)	—	50 / 5 gal.	1/1 - 12/31

*Except at Enhanced Opportunity Shore Angler Program Designated Fishing Sites Contact CTDEEP Marine Fisheries Division for more information

NOTE: SPEARFISHING IS SUBJECT TO ALL SPORT FISHING RESTRICTIONS. ALL FISH ARE MEASURED FROM THE TIP OF THE SNOUT TO THE END OF THE TAIL (TOTAL LENGTH).

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES
MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM
860-434-6043
deep.marine.fisheries@ct.gov

www.ct.gov/deep/saltwaterfishing

To Report Fishing Violations
1-800-842-4357

2017 MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHING REGULATIONS

At Enhanced Shore Fishing Sites*

	Minimum Length Longitud mínimo 最小長度 inches/pulgadas / 英寸	Daily Limit Limite diario 每天魚量限制 魚	Open Season Temporada abierto 開放季節 mm/dd - 月/日
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HICKORY SHAD	—	6	1/1 - 12/31
WHITE PERCH	7	30	1/1 - 12/31
MENHADEN (BUNKER)	—	50 / 5 gal.	1/1 - 12/31

***Enhanced Opportunity Shore Fishing Site. Reduced minimum length for Summer Flounder and Scup!**

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