



# MARINE FISHERIES PROGRAM

## QUARTERLY REPORT

March 2018



### ➤ FISHERIES MANAGEMENT, MONITORING & RESEARCH:

#### ASMFC / MAFMC Management.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission held its last meeting from February 6-8 in Arlington, VA. Notable items on the agenda included American lobster, winter flounder, American eel, weakfish, striped bass, summer flounder, scup and black sea bass. The outcomes from these board meetings are excerpted from the Commission's Winter Meeting summary below. The full meeting summary and motions can be found at:

<http://www.asmfc.org/files/Meetings/2018WinterMeeting/2018WinterMeetingSummary.pdf>

◆ **Lobster:** The American Lobster Management Board (Board) approved American Lobster Addendum XXVI/Jonah Crab Addendum III (Addenda) to the American Lobster and Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). The Addenda improve the spatial resolution of harvester data collection, expand the required harvester reporting data elements, establish a timeline for increased harvester reporting in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries, and prioritize the development of electronic harvester reporting. In addition, the Addenda include recommendations for improved reporting and biological sampling in federal waters.

The Addenda respond to two concerns: 1) the current requirements for harvester reporting are insufficient to respond to external management actions; and 2) while the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries continue to expand offshore, most of the biological sampling occurs inshore or nearshore. In particular, the Board expressed concern the spatial resolution of harvester data is too coarse to respond to finer-scale management issues. As a result, the Addenda improve the spatial resolution of data by requiring fishermen to report via 10 minute squares, which further divide the existing statistical areas. In addition, the addenda establish a one-year pilot program to explore electronic tracking devices in the fishery which would address the special resolution and enforcement concerns. The addenda require additional data elements in harvester reports including number of traps per trawl and number of buoy lines in order to collect information on gear configurations. Finally, the Addenda establish a deadline that, within five years, states are required to implement 100% harvester reporting, with the prioritization of electronic harvester reporting development during that time. In the interim, jurisdictions not at 100% harvester reporting should redistribute the current effort associated with harvester reporting to focus on active, as opposed to latent, permit holders.

The Addenda also improve the biological sampling requirements by establishing a baseline of ten sampling trips per year in the American lobster/Jonah crab fishery and encourages states with more than 10% of coastwide landings in either the American lobster or Jonah crab fisheries to conduct additional sampling trips.

Finally, the Addenda provide three recommendations for actions in federal waters. Specifically, a harvester reporting requirement be established for federal lobster permits in order to collect information from the growing offshore fishery; a fixed-gear VTR form be created to improve data collection in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries; and a biological sampling



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program be established in federal waters in order to address current data gaps in the assessment. These recommendations will be forwarded to NOAA Fisheries.

◆ **Winter Flounder:** The Winter Flounder Management Board reviewed the 2017 stock assessments for the Gulf of Maine (GOM) and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) stocks, and to consider changes to the specifications for the 2018 fishing year.

Results from the 2017 Operational Stocks Assessments for the GOM and SNE/MA stocks indicated that the GOM stock biomass is unknown and overfishing is not occurring and the SNE/MA stock is overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Primary sources of uncertainty include the catchability parameter in the GOM stock assessment and the appearance of cryptic biomass (biomass seen in the model but not seen in the surveys) in the SNE/MA stock.

Next, the Board discussed specifications for the 2018 fishing year. The biggest change occurred to the GOM state-waters sub-component, which decreased from 122mt to 67mt. The SNE/MA state water sub-component slightly increased from 70mt to 73mt. The Board decided not to change the winter flounder specifications at this time, but did highlight the need for improved communication with the New England Fishery Management Council regarding mutual management goals. The Board tasked the TC to review a potential conservation equivalency proposal submitted by Rhode Island regarding aggregate commercial trip limits in the SNE/MA stock.

◆ **American Eel:** The American Eel Management Board approved American Eel Draft Addendum V for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes alternative coastwide landings caps, management triggers, state-by-state allocations, and transfer provisions for the yellow eel commercial fishery; as well as alternatives to the current Maine glass eel commercial quota and the aquaculture provisions of the plan. The Board initiated Draft Addendum V in October 2017 in response to concerns over the management program as specified in Addendum IV.

Currently, the yellow eel fishery is managed to an annual coastwide landings cap of 907,671 pounds. The coastwide cap is evaluated against two management triggers: (1) the coastwide cap is exceeded by more than 10% in a given year; or (2) the coastwide cap is exceeded for two consecutive years, regardless of the percent overage. If either of these triggers are tripped, state by state quotas will be implemented. 2016 landings exceeded the coastwide cap by less than ten percent. If landings in 2017 exceeded the coastwide cap by any amount, state-by-state quotas would be implemented. The Board expressed concern that the current management triggers do not account for annual fluctuations in landings and the immediate implementation of state-by-state quotas would pose significant administrative challenges. Draft Addendum V proposes alternatives to the coastwide cap, management triggers, state-by-state allocations and transfer provisions to address the Board concerns.

Draft Addendum V proposes alternative quota levels for the Maine glass eel fishery. Specifically, increasing the quota above the 2015-2018 level of 9,688 pounds. The Draft Addendum also proposes changes to the aquaculture provisions of the plan. It includes an option that would



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allow contiguously bordered states to pool their 200 pound glass eel aquaculture allowance, up to a maximum of 600 pounds.

Connecticut plans to host a public hearing on the Draft Addendum. The date for the hearing have not been determined at this time. Once we know, we will send notice via the Marine Fisheries Listserv.

◆ **Weakfish:** The Weakfish Management Board reviewed annual state compliance with the FMP. The Board found all states to be in compliance with the measures of the FMP. The Board then discussed the biological sampling requirements of Addendum I to Amendment 4 to the FMP and determined fishery-independent samples are not appropriate for fulfilling length sample requirements, but fishery-independent samples may be appropriate for fulfilling age sample requirements, depending on whether the length distribution and capture location of fishery-independent samples are reflective of the weakfish fishery. The Board also tasked the TC to review weakfish discard data to determine whether occurrences of commercial trips approaching the 100 pound trip limit have increased and what actions could be taken to reduce discards, such as adjusted trip limits to retain more fish or fishing modifications to reduce discards.

◆ **Striped Bass:** The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board reviewed a Conservation Equivalency Proposal submitted by Maryland for its recreational striped bass fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland anglers, particularly the charter boat sector, have expressed concerns regarding the high ratio of released fish to retained fish since the size limit in the Chesapeake Bay was increased to 20 inches (to meet the requirements of Addendum IV to Amendment 6 to the Atlantic Striped Bass FMP), which has made it difficult to attract customers. Additionally, there is evidence that the release mortality rate, particularly in the summer months, is higher than the 9% value used in the coast-wide striped bass stock assessment. Accordingly, Maryland proposed a number of alternative measures for its recreational fishery in the Chesapeake Bay, with the primary goal of reducing dead discards (i.e., direct harvest would increase but the number of fish released would decrease resulting in minimal change of total removals). However, after consulting with its constituents and stakeholders, Maryland sought Board approval for one option: 19 inches minimum size limit from May 16-December 15 with a two-fish bag limit (only one fish can be greater than 28 inches) and all anglers fishing with non-artificial bait or lures would be required to use circle hooks.

The Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee (TC), the Advisory Panel (AP) and the ASMFC Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) reviewed the proposal and provided comment for Board consideration. Regarding Option B, while the TC supported the implementation of circle hook requirements to improve post-release survival, it did not endorse such requirements for conservation equivalency at this time due to challenges and uncertainty with determining the realized mortality reductions. Essentially, angler response and other variables, including enforceability challenges corroborated by the LEC, make it difficult to accurately quantify the realized benefits from a mandatory circle hook requirement. However, the AP commented that



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the conservation benefits outweigh those concerns, as long as the mandatory circle hook provision is explicitly defined regarding hook specifications (i.e., definition of a “circle hook,” hook size, and specifying offset versus inline).

The Board approved Option B from Maryland’s proposal for implementation in 2018, with the understanding that Maryland would include circle hook specifications in its regulations. The Board’s decision acknowledges the current issue in the Chesapeake Bay regarding high discards (resulting from a combination of more restrictive regulations and the availability of recent strong year classes to the fishery) and the challenges that has created for for-hire fisheries operating in the Bay. Maryland will collect enforcement, compliance, and other relevant information during 2018 and will report back to the Board with a review of the effectiveness of the measures in February 2019. The Board will review the information from the 2018 fishery and determine if new measures met the intent of the proposal. If the intent was not realized, adjustments for 2019 and later may be required.

The Board also received a progress update on the 2018 benchmark stock assessment. The benchmark is scheduled for peer-review in November 2018 at the 66th SAW/SARC. The first modeling workshop will be in the spring with a second modeling workshop likely in late summer or early fall.

◆ **Black Sea Bass:** The Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXX to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum establishes a regional allocation of the coastwide black sea bass Recreational Harvest Limit (RHL) to address state concerns regarding equity and accountability in recreational black sea bass management.

From 2012-2016, the recreational fishery was managed under an ad-hoc regional management approach, whereby the states of Massachusetts through New Jersey individually crafted measures aimed at adjusting harvest by the same percentage, while the states of Delaware through North Carolina set their regulations consistent with the federal waters measures. While this approach allowed the states flexibility in setting management measures, some states expressed a need for increased equity and accountability in managing harvest to coastwide catch limits.

Accounting for geographic differences in the stock and fishery interests, Addendum XXX uses a combination of exploitable biomass information from the latest stock assessment and historical harvest to regionally allocate the coastwide RHL. The controversial final allocation is based on a hybrid of the allocation options that were presented in the Draft Addendum. The three management regions are defined as Massachusetts through New York, New Jersey as a state-specific region, and Delaware through North Carolina; their respective allocations of the 2018 coastwide RHL are 61.35%, 30.24%, and 8.41%. The Technical Committee will work with the states to develop regional proposals for Board review and approval in March 2018.

To improve accountability, the states within each region will be collectively responsible for managing harvest to their regional allocation through the cooperative development of recreational measures. To increase regional consistency in measures, each region will establish



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a standard set of measures, with each state in the region afforded the flexibility to adjust their measures up to one inch in minimum size and three fish in possession limit. The Addendum also initiates the development of a new process for evaluation and specification of measures against the annual catch limit, which aims to provide more year-to-year stability in management measures.

◆ **Summer Flounder:** All states and regions with the exception of North Carolina submitted proposals to adjust their 2018 recreational management measures. In December 2017, the Board approved continuation of Addendum XXVIII for 2018 and specified the proposed measures could liberalize harvest up to 17% above projected 2017 harvest (3.23 million pounds). Collectively, the potential measures outlined in the proposals would result in an approximate 15.8% increase in coastwide harvest from 2017 levels. Based on the recommendations of the Technical Committee (TC), the Board approved the proposals and methodologies submitted by the states. The states will finalize their summer flounder management measures by the spring of 2018.

◆ **Scup:** The northern region of Massachusetts through New York and the state of New Jersey submitted proposals to adjust their 2018 recreational management measures. At their previous meeting in December, the Board tasked the TC with evaluating the potential increase in harvest if the northern region states reduced their minimum size limit from 10 to nine inches. The 2018 RHL for Scup is 7.37 million pounds, and based on preliminary harvest in 2017 (4.65 million pounds through October), measures could be adjusted to allow up to 59% increase in harvest for 2018. The northern region states' proposal put forward analysis that demonstrated reducing the size limit by one inch could increase harvest up to 27% from the region's 2017 harvest levels. Additionally, the proposal outlined that the states of Rhode Island and Connecticut would reduce their minimum size limit at select shore sites from nine to eight inches. Lastly, New Jersey proposed to extend its season length 243 days to a year-round open season, resulting in an approximate 34% increase from the 2017 harvest level. The combined changes in measures would result in a coastwide harvest of approximately 6.73 million pounds (~91% of the 2018 RHL). Based on the TC's recommendation, the Board approved both the size limit adjusts for the states of Massachusetts through New York (nine inch minimum size limit; eight inch size limit for Rhode Island and Connecticut at select shore sites) and an increase in New Jersey's season length to 365 days. States will finalize their regulations over the next couple of weeks for the 2018 recreational scup fishery.

◆ **Atlantic Menhaden:** Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden FMP addresses a suite of commercial management measures including revised state-by-state commercial allocations. States now get a minimum of 0.5% of the coastwide TAC, which for Connecticut means a 2018 quota of 2.476 million pounds, an increase of about 2.4 million pounds. The Department is hosting a public meeting on March 26 to get public input on how to manage Connecticut's 2018 commercial menhaden quota. For more details, see the link to the hearing notice in the Notices to Fishermen section of this report.



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## ➤ MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHING:

### Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP)

#### ◆ CONNECTICUT'S 2016 TOTAL HARVEST ESTIMATES (numbers)

2016		
SPECIES	TOTAL HARVEST (A+B1)	PSE
<b>BLUFISH</b>	<b>328482</b>	21.5
DOGFISH SHARKS	2979	82.6
SKATES/RAYS	23	85.9
ATLANTIC COD	20341	53.1
POLLOCK	244	88.2
DOLPHINS	247	106.4
KINGFISHES	8637	88.5
WEAKFISH	1186	107.5
<b>SUMMER FLOUNDER</b>	<b>219370</b>	18.2
WINTER FLOUNDER	33	100
HERRINGS	331654	23
<b>SCUP</b>	<b>878707</b>	25.7
<b>BLACK SEA BASS</b>	<b>450030</b>	16.2
SEAROBINS	35363	43.7
<b>STRIPED BASS</b>	<b>59625</b>	22.1
WHITE PERCH	3508	101.4
ATLANTIC MACKEREL	444	94.5
LITTLE TUNNY/ATLANTIC BONITO	173	89.2
CUNNER	18	105.9
<b>TAUTOG</b>	<b>166864</b>	37.8
<b>TOTAL HARVEST FOR CT</b>	<b>2522424</b>	





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◆ **CONNECTICUT'S 2017 PRELIMINARY TOTAL HARVEST ESTIMATES (numbers)**

2017		
SPECIES	TOTAL HARVEST (A+B1)	PSE
BLUFISH	240508	20.2
DOGFISH SHARKS	3143	55.6
SKATES/RAYS	3376	77.5
ATLANTIC COD	1946	95
DOLPHINS	592	92.8
<b>SUMMER FLOUNDER</b>	<b>87136</b>	17.4
WINTER FLOUNDER	367	66.1
HERRINGS	263561	37.5
<b>SCUP</b>	<b>1016698</b>	17.5
<b>BLACK SEA BASS</b>	<b>374434</b>	15.9
SEAROBINS	51449	20.9
<b>STRIPED BASS</b>	<b>40006</b>	21.8
WHITE PERCH	4367	89.8
TOADFISHES	2701	94.3
TRIGGERFISHES/FILEFISHES	3141	70.3
ATLANTIC MACKEREL	1136	101.2
LITTLE TUNNY/ATLANTIC BONITO	5174	64.6
CUNNER	402	63.1
<b>TAUTOG</b>	<b>126229</b>	25.8
<b>TOTAL HARVEST FOR CT</b>	<b>3079640</b>	





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## ♦ Marine Volunteer Angler Survey (VAS)

In 2017, a total of **28 anglers participated in the program, recording 619 trips** for an average of 23 trips each. Fewer VAS anglers 6% (5) entered their own data through the eLogbook application on the ACCSP website ([www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org)) in 2017 than 2016 (9 anglers), which was the third year of the eLogbook program. Most of the anglers that entered their own data expressed favorable comments toward the SAFIS eLogbook.

The **private boat mode comprised the most trips (65%) recorded, followed by shore based trips (35%)**, see Job 3 for description of regular and enhanced shore sites. Of the total, **92% of the recorded trips were successful in catching fish. VAS anglers recorded catching 22 species including near shore species to open ocean pelagic species.** This included eight principal recreational species currently under fisheries management plans which comprised 84% of the total catch. With the exception of several bait species and a few pelagic species, the release rate for nearly all species was 78% or greater.

**VAS participants measured over 99% of their total catch (10,623 fish) and over 99% of the seven principal species they caught (8,855 total).** These data show a wide range in the release rate of the principal species. For example, 78% of scup caught were released while 83% of summer flounder caught were released. For bluefish, which has no minimum legal size, the release rate was 66%. See Figure 3.1 through Figure– 3.7 for length frequency information on the 2017 VAS harvest and catch & release data.

*Measured catch and disposition of eight principal recreational species.*

Species	Harvested		Released		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Black Sea Bass	328	14%	1,991	86%	2,319
Bluefish	166	34%	321	66%	487
Hickory Shad	16	13%	107	87%	123
Scup	566	22%	1,985	78%	2,551
Striped Bass	62	3%	2,093	97%	2,155
Summer Flounder	141	17%	677	83%	818
Tautog	72	13%	476	87%	548
Winter Flounder	0		31	100%	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,351</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>7,681</b>	<b>85.0%</b>	<b>9,032</b>



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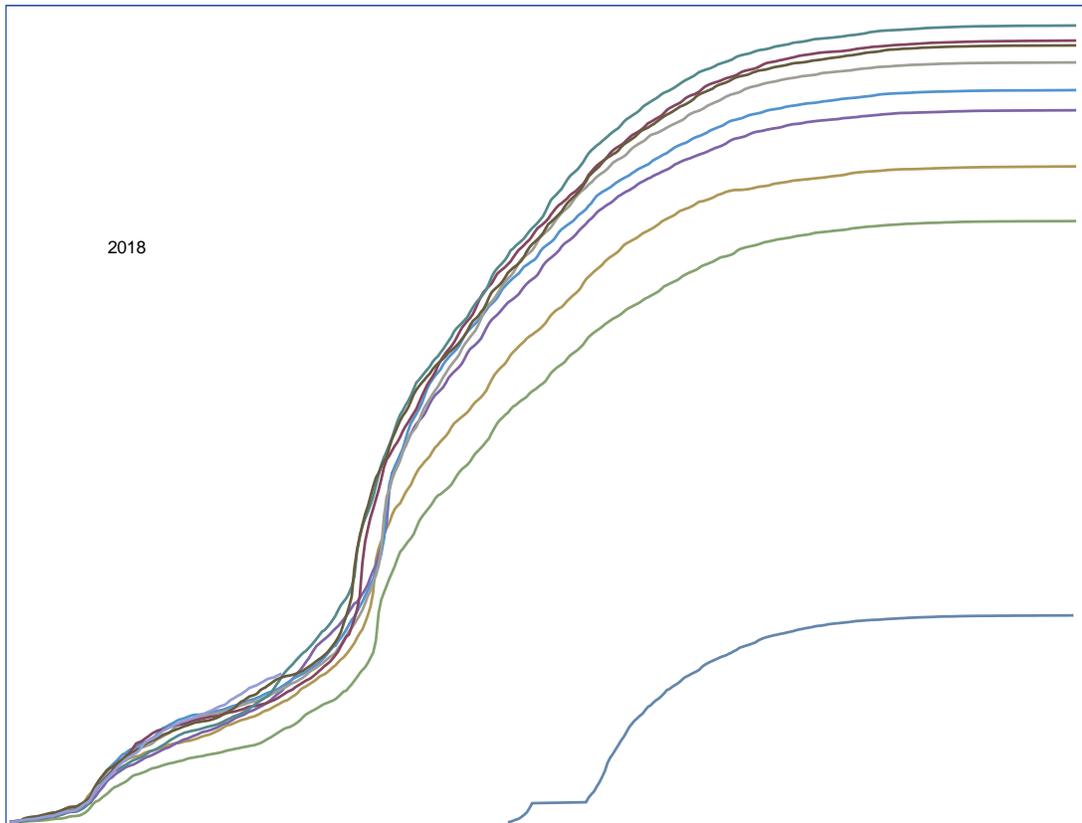
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## ➤ MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHING LICENSES:

### ◆ Marine fishing license sales in 2010 - 2018.

2018 Marine Licenses issued through March 12, 2018.





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## Marine Waters Fishing Licenses, 2015 – 2018. Licenses by Type

Privilege Type	Season				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
10195 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Code 9 (Intellect Disabled)	378	427	445	406	62
10196 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Code 5 (Blind)	80	83	82	80	15
10197 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Type 17 (Handicapped)	505	511	505	467	120
1296 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic	18,777	18,301	18,752	18,745	559
1297 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic (Non-Res)	2,692	2,870	2,996	3,008	84
1337 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, Free Annual - Age 65 Plus	29,353	31,248	33,014	33,253	10,495
1345 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, 1-day	690	802	733	805	14
1346 - All Waters Fishing Lic	66,304	65,988	67,254	64,909	8,811
1347 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic	459	448	440	507	130
1348 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic	21,072	17,185	16,043	18,048	6,738
1349 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Arch Deer / Small Game Lic	1,663	1,813	1,948	3,844	1,547
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)	1,080	1,001	1,050	.	.
1352 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, 3-day (Non-Res)	1,367	1,377	1,491	1,460	8
1353 - All Waters Fishing Lic (Non-Res)	1,426	1,519	1,702	1,804	356
1354 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic (Non-Res)	137	138	142	133	61
1355 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic (Non-Res)	23	25	21	15	4
1475 - AW Fish Lic / Fa SS Lic (Fa Hunt; S/R/Mz PL Deer; PL Sp Trky)	2,700	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	1,903	1,927	2,214	2,229	.
1953 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic	.	376	334	365	113
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	368	16
1958 - All Waters Fishing Lic (16-17)	.	2,778	2,783	2,585	294
1959 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic, 1-day (16-17)	.	20	24	21	.
1960 - Marine Waters Fishing Lic / Firearms Hunting Lic (16-17)	.	9	6	11	2
1962 - All Waters Fishing Lic / Arch Deer / Small Game Lic (16-17)	.	52	9	89	33
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	451	.
2024 - Free One-Day Sport Fishing License - 2nd	.	533	544	380	.
<b>Total</b>	<b>150,609</b>	<b>154,944</b>	<b>157,924</b>	<b>153,983</b>	<b>29,462</b>



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### ➤ NOTICES TO FISHERMEN:

3/9/2018 [Notice of Public Meeting](#)

The CT DEEP Marine Fisheries Program is holding a Public Informational Meeting to get input on potential management of menhaden to comply with Amendment 3 to the interstate Fishery Management Plan for Menhaden. (N18-03)

**Public Meeting to be held March 26, 2018**

2/26/2018 [Notice of Public Meeting](#)

The CT DEEP Marine Fisheries Program is holding a Public Informational Meeting to get input on potential 2018 management measures to comply with the joint Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission fishery management plans for summer flounder, black sea bass and scup. (18-02)

**Public Meeting to be held March 5, 2018**

1/16/2018 [Request for Nominations to the New England Fishery Management Council](#)

The State of Connecticut is seeking nominees for upcoming open seats on the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC). (N18-01)