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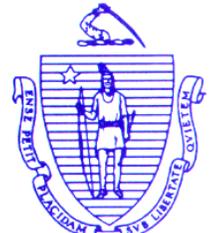
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Public Meeting Announcement

Public meeting to update federal lobster permit holders about trap allocation transfer program

January 23, 2015 at 11:30 am, Sea Crest Resort, Falmouth MA

On Friday, January 23, DMF will be co-hosting a meeting with state partners, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), to update lobster permit holders about the upcoming trap allocation transfer program for federal permit holders.

Lobster conservation in three management areas is based partly on restrictive trap limits derived from fishing history with the potential to transfer trap allocation among permit holders. In Area 3 (offshore), Outer Cape Cod, and Area 2 (southern New England), there have been longstanding permit-specific trap limits that have prevented a rise in fishing effort (traps). These programs were largely supported by the industry with an expectation that there would be accommodations for permit holders to mitigate the impacts of low trap allocations – and trap cuts – through a trap allocation transfer program.

While some states have accommodated trap allocation transfers between state-only permit holders in recent years, permit holders who hold federal permits have not been allowed to transfer nor receive allocation from another permit holder. The process has been deliberate over the past few years as states and NMFS have worked through the ASMFC processes to develop a jointly managed system for trap allocations and transfers.

In the last year, NMFS has worked with lobstermen in OCC and Area 2 to establish federal allocations for federal permit holders in these areas. Concurrently, the ASMFC has been working on the development of a database that merges state and federal permit and allocation information. This is an unprecedented initiative and will allow partnering jurisdictions to co-manage lobster effort.

The timing of this program is critical because in 2016, multi-year trap allocation cuts will begin in Areas 2 and 3. The overall cuts will approach 50% in Area 2 and 25% in Area 3. In Area 2, a six-year schedule of cuts will reduce traps by 25% in the first year followed by five consecutive years of trap cuts at 5%. Area 3's cuts will be five consecutive years at 5%. The trap allocation transfer program is expected to mitigate the effects of the cuts and allow some fishermen to build their trap numbers back up to higher levels.

The public meeting on January 23 will inform permit holders on the recently completed federal allocation process, timelines for applications for transfers, protocols for these processes, and the form and function of the new database. Many of these administrative aspects are works in progress so fishermen's input will be valuable.

The meeting will be held during the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association's Annual Weekend in Falmouth, MA. There is no admission charge to the trade show or seminars. For more information on the seminar, contact DMF's Dan McKiernan at dan.mckiernan@state.ma.us or at 617-626-1536. The MLA can be reached at 781-545-6984.