



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES
FISH AND WILDLIFE
&
LAW ENFORCEMENT

Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Regulations



**Part XVI
Menhaden**

~~May 11, 2016~~

Proposed/annotated changes

Public Hearing
February 13, 2017

Hearing Item 3.
Commercial Menhaden
(section 16.1 in its entirety)

Option 1: Status quo

16.1 Commercial:

16.1.1 Menhaden Management Area: Narragansett Bay in its entirety is designated a Menhaden Management Area pursuant to RIGL 20-4.1-1. This area shall include the east and west passages of Narragansett Bay, Mt. Hope Bay, and the Sakonnet River, and be bordered on the south by a line from Bonnet Point to Beavertail Point to Castle Hill Light. The southern boundary further extends from Land's End to Sachuest Point and then to Sakonnet Light. The following regulations govern all commercial menhaden operations conducted in the Menhaden Management Area (Management Area). (RIGL 20-4.1-1)

(A) Opening and closure of fishery:

(1) Fishery opening - possession limits:

(a) Biomass Floor: On an annual basis in the spring, the DFW shall conduct regular estimates of the standing stock of menhaden present in the Management Area utilizing approved scientific monitoring methods. On the basis of those estimates, the Division of Fish & Wildlife (DFW) shall open the commercial fishery at an initial possession limit of 120,000 pounds per vessel per calendar day when the estimated weekly standing stock reaches 2,000,000 pounds.

(b) The possession limits may be modified by the DFW on the basis of the estimated weekly standing stock of menhaden in the Management Area derived via approved scientific monitoring methods.

(c) The possession or taking of menhaden is prohibited on any Saturday, Sunday, official state holiday, or prior to sunrise or following sunset, unless using a non-directed gear type for menhaden. Non-directed gear shall be defined as cast nets, floating fish traps, and rod and reel.

(2) Fishery closure:

(a) Biomass Ceiling: When 50% of the estimated standing stock of menhaden stock present in the management area, above the minimum threshold amount of 1,500,000 pounds, is harvested, the DFW shall close the menhaden fishery until further notice.

(b) If at any time the stock estimate drops below 1,500,000 pounds, the DFW shall close the commercial fishery until further notice.

(c) Non-directed gear possession limit allowance: Upon closure of the fishery, the possession limit is 6,000 pounds per vessel per day for vessels utilizing non-directed gear.

(B) Purse seine restrictions: The use of purse seines in the Management Area shall be permitted only in accordance with the following terms and conditions:

(1) All nets shall be less than 100 fathoms (600 feet) in length and less than 15 fathoms (90 feet) in depth.

(2) All nets shall be marked with fluorescent-colored float buoys, distinguishable from the other float buoys on the net, at intervals of 50 feet.

(3) Annually, prior to use, all nets shall be inspected and certified as being in conformance with the provisions of this section by the DEM Division of Law Enforcement (DLE). Once inspected and certified, a net may be used throughout the duration of the calendar year in which it was inspected, provided that it is not altered with regard to any of the provisions of this section. Any net that is altered with regard to any of the provisions of this section must be re-inspected and recertified prior to use.

(C) Permanently closed areas (waters) to purse seining for menhaden:

(1) Providence River: All waters north of a straight line extending from Rocky Point to Conimicut Light to Nayatt Point.

(2) Greenwich Bay: All waters in Greenwich Bay west of a line from the flag pole on Warwick Point to Sandy Point.

(3) Harvest of menhaden in permanently closed areas: No person harvesting menhaden shall possess more than 200 menhaden per vessel per calendar day unless using gear types other than purse seine.

(D) Commercial vessel restrictions: A fishing vessel engaged in the commercial menhaden fishery may not have a useable fish storage capacity greater than 120,000 pounds. Prior to the commencement of fishing, for any vessel not previously certified through this process, each vessel must be inspected by a certified marine surveyor and assessed with regard to its fish storage capacity. Such certification must be kept aboard the vessel at all times. Vessels must either be certified as having a useable storage capacity of 120,000 pounds or less, or for vessels with a fish storage capacity greater than 120,000 pounds the excess capacity is rendered unusable in accordance with the specifications set forth in the assessment.

(E) Fall opening within the Menhaden Management Area:

(1) Beginning September 1 annually, the area south of a line from the Jamestown and Newport Bridges, and the area south of a line from Fogland Point to Sandy Point in the Sakonnet River, to the southern extent of the Management Area will be open to the harvest of menhaden by purse seine as long as the states quota has not been exhausted or if the Episodic Event Set Aside Program, as described in this section, has been enacted in RI.

(2) Possession limit: 25,000 pounds per vessel per day.

(F) Reporting requirements:

(1) Any fisher intending to engage in the commercial menhaden fishery in the Management Area shall notify the DLE at (401) 222-3070 prior to taking or possessing menhaden. At the time that a fisher advises the DLE of his/her intent to harvest menhaden, the DLE shall notify said fisher of any modification which may have been established in the possession limit for menhaden.

(2) Each person engaging in the commercial menhaden fishery shall contact the DFW at (401) 423-1940 at the end of each day to report the area fished and the amount of menhaden in possession by the fisher in pounds.

16.1.2 Landing of menhaden in RI under State Quota Program: An annual statewide quota for menhaden is established annually for the State by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). The quota shall pertain solely to landings of menhaden in RI and shall not pertain to the possession of menhaden in RI waters prior to landing.

(A) The landing limit is unlimited until the quota has been reached, as determined by the DFW.

(B) Once the quota has been reached, the fishery will close for directed fisheries, including but not limited to purse seine operations, and the landing limit for non-directed fisheries will be 6,000 pounds per vessel per day.

(C) All commercial menhaden operations conducted in the Management Area, prior to and after the State's quota has been reached, are subject to the provisions of section 16.1.1, unless using non-directed gear.

16.1.4 Episodic Event Set Aside Program:

(A) After the State's quota has been reached, if RI is approved to participate in the Episodic Event Set Aside Program for Menhaden, as established by the

ASMFC, the landing limit for menhaden will be 120,000 pounds per vessel per day for vessels associated with directed fisheries for Menhaden, until the Set Aside quota has been exhausted, as determined by the ASMFC and/or the DFW, at which time the program will end and the directed fishery will close. Vessels that target and land menhaden in RI under this program must harvest only from RI waters and, if operating in the Management Area, must adhere to all of the provisions as specified in these regulations.

(B) Reporting Requirements:

(1) Any person intending to engage in the commercial menhaden fishery under the Episodic Event Set Aside Program must notify the DLE at (401) 222-3070 prior to taking or possessing menhaden. At the time that a fisher advises the DLE of his/her intent to harvest menhaden, the DLE shall notify said fisher of any modification to the possession limit for menhaden that is applicable to operations conducted in the Management Area.

(2) Each person engaged in the commercial menhaden fishery shall contact the DFW at (401) 423-1940 at the end of each daily trip or within four hours thereof to report the amount of menhaden landed by the fisher in pounds. These menhaden-specific reporting requirements are in addition to all other existing commercial fishing reporting requirements as set forth in the RI Marine Fisheries Regulations (RIMFR).

(C) Vessels not associated with directed fisheries for menhaden may continue to harvest and land in RI up to 6,000 pounds per vessel per day as bycatch. Such vessels are not subject to the provisions of sub-sections 16.1.1(A)(1)(b) & (c), but are subject to the provisions of section 16.1.1 with regard to operations conducted in the Management Area, and are subject to all existing commercial fishing reporting requirements as set forth in the RIMFR.

(D) The Episodic Event Set Aside Program will end on November 1 annually or when the set aside quota has been harvested, whichever first occurs.

16.1.5 No person may transfer or attempt to transfer at sea, from one vessel to another, any finfish identified in these regulations.

16.1.6 Prohibition on the harvesting of menhaden for reduction processing: The taking of Menhaden for reduction (fish meal) purposes is prohibited in Rhode Island waters. A vessel will be considered in the reduction (fish meal) business if any portion of the vessel's catch is sold for reduction.

Option 2: Change bycatch limit as defined in ASMFC Addendum I to Amendment 2

16.1.2 Landing of menhaden in RI under State Quota Program: An annual

statewide quota for menhaden is established annually for the State by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). The quota shall pertain solely to landings of menhaden in RI and shall not pertain to the possession of menhaden in RI waters prior to landing.

(A) The landing limit is unlimited until the quota has been reached, as determined by the DFW.

(B) Once the quota has been reached, the fishery will close for directed fisheries, including but not limited to purse seine operations, and ~~a the landing bycatch limit for non-directed fisheries will be 6,000 pounds per vessel per day will be in effect.~~ The bycatch limit will be:

(1) Non-directed fisheries: 6,000 pounds per vessel per day.

(2) Pound nets, fish traps, anchored/staked gill nets, and fyke nets: If two commercially licensed individuals are harvesting from the same vessel, two (2) daily possession limits (12,000 pounds per vessel per day).

Option 3: Industry Proposal

(E) Fall opening within the Menhaden Management Area:

(1) Beginning September 1 annually, the ~~area south of a line from the Jamestown and Newport Bridges, and the area south of a line from Fogland Point to Sandy Point in the Sakonnet River, to the southern extent of the~~ Management Area will be open to the harvest of menhaden by purse seine as long as the states quota has not been exhausted or if the Episodic Event Set Aside Program, as described in this section, has been enacted in RI.

(2) Possession limit: 25,000 pounds per vessel per day.