



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Division of Marine Fisheries

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INTER-OFFICE MEMO

To: Scott Olszewski,
Acting Chief

From: Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

Date: October 22, 2025

Subject: Final decisions regarding proposed amendments to the RI Marine Fisheries regulations.

I have received and reviewed your memo to me, dated October 21, 2025 (attached), regarding the regulatory matters that were subject of a public hearing held on September 15, 2025 and RI Marine Fisheries Council meeting held on October 20, 2025. The final decision for each regulatory matter is as follows:

1. **Electronic Negative Reporting Due Dates:**

Decision: Amend the rule as noticed and recommended by the Council and Division, which establishes due dates for electronic negative reporting.

2. **Reporting Requirements Upon Issuance (transfer) of a New License with Sale of a Vessel and/or Gear:**

Decision: Amend the rule as noticed and recommended by the Council and Division, which requires transferee and transferer catch and effort reporting compliance prior to the license transfer approval upon issuance of a new license with sale of a vessel and/or gear.

3. **Prioritization Categories for the Issuance of New Licenses – Update with Revised Licensing Structure:**

Decision: Amend the rule as noticed and recommended by the Council and Division, which removes reference to “Commercial Fishing License (CFL)” and “Principal Effort License (PEL)” in rule because these terms are now obsolete since the statutory licensing restructure that became effective in 2022.

4. **Clarification of Restricted Finfish Species:**

Decision: Amend the rule as noticed and recommended by the Council and Division, which further clarifies that scup is restricted only when harvested from May 1 through September 30; and that black sea bass, summer flounder, striped bass, and tautog are restricted for the entire year.

5. **Exit:Entry Ratio for the Unlimited Finfish Endorsement:**

Decision: Maintain status quo as recommended by the Council and supported by the Division, which maintains an exit:entry ratio of 2:1 for the Unlimited Finfish Endorsement for the 2026 license year.

6. **Commercial Green Crab License:**

Decision: Amend the rule as recommended by the Council, which establishes a new commercial green crab license for an annual fee of \$10, and provides that applicants are not eligible for this license if otherwise authorized by another applicable commercial fishing license (e.g. Multipurpose Fishing License).

7. **Jonah Crab Claw Possession Allowance:**

Decision: Maintain status quo for the Jonah Crab claw possession allowance. I further direct the Division to bring the development of the possession limit and minimum size to the Spring 2026 regulatory cycle to solicit further public comment on defining the bycatch fishery.

8. **Lobster Trap Tag Transfer Application Period for State Vessels:**

Decision: Maintain status quo as recommended by the Division, due to potential inconsistency with the ASMFC fisheries management plan (FMP). I direct the Division to review the FMP and determine if proposing these changes are appropriate at a later date.

9. **Horseshoe Crab Closure at New and Full Moons:**

Decision: Amend the rule as noticed and recommended by the Council and Division, which clarifies the rule so that harvest is prohibited forty-eight hours preceding the new and full moons through forty-eight hours following the new and full moons; consistent with current practice and enforcement.

10. **Biomedical Horseshoe Crab Harvest in Coastal Salt Ponds and Little Narragansett Bay:**

Decision: Amend the rule as noticed and as recommended by the Council and Division, which prohibits biomedical horseshoe crab harvest in coastal salt ponds and Little Narragansett Bay.

11. **Summer Flounder Exemption Certificate Expiration and Renewal:**

Decision: Amend the rule as recommended by the Council, which establishes the next renewal cycle for the Summer Flounder Exemption Certificate in ten years (2035).

12. **Summer Flounder Exemption Certificate Transfer Application Period After Sale of Vessel:**

Decision: Amend the rule as noticed and as recommended by the Council and Division, which establishes that transfer applications be submitted to the Department no later than sixty (60) days after the change in ownership.

13. **Bissel Cove/Fox Island Shellfish Management Area Oyster Harvest Prohibition:**

Decision: Amend the rule as noticed and recommended by the Council and Division, which will allow the current prohibition in the Bissel Cove/Fox Island Shellfish Management Area to expire on November 15, 2025 and be re-opened to oyster harvest.

14. **Quonochontaug Pond Shellfish Management Area Oyster Harvest Prohibition:**

Decision: Amend the rule as noticed and as recommended by the Council and Division, which continues the pond-wide oyster harvest prohibition in the Quonochontaug Pond Shellfish Management Area until Dec 31, 2029.