



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Division of Marine Fisheries

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Summary of Proposed Rulemaking

Public Hearing: Tuesday, February 17, 2026

RI Marine Fisheries Council: Monday, March 23, 2026

Note: Order of proposals reflects order received

Proposals reflect amendments for regulatory changes, however, STATUS QUO is always an option, unless otherwise specified

Part 1 – Finfish (250-RICR-90-00-1)

1. 2026 Recreational Striped Bass Management:

- **Proposal 1 (Division/Noticed):** Change the total length definition for striped bass FMP compliance.

Proposed Rule (Part 1 – Definitions and General Provisions; section 1.10(NNNNN)):

"Total length" means the straight linear distance from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail of a finfish species. All finfish species' minimum sizes are measured as total length, except for coastal sharks and striped bass. The, in which minimum size for coastal sharks is measured by fork length. The minimum size for striped bass is measured as the greatest straight line length in inches as measured on a fish from the anterior most tip of the jaw or snout to the farthest extremity of the tail with the upper and lower fork of the tail squeezed together.

2. Other non-substantive Changes:

- **Proposal 1 (Division/Noticed):** Add two new common species (if rules adopted for Atlantic bonito and False albacore).

Proposed Rule (Part 1 – Definitions and General Provisions; section 1.12):

"Atlantic Bonito" means *Sarda sarda*.

"False Albacore" means *Euthynnus alletteratus*, little tunny.

Part 3 – Finfish (250-RICR-90-00-3)

1. 2026 Recreational Bluefish Management:

- **Proposal 1 (Division/Noticed):** Change the recreational possession limit for FMP compliance.

Proposed Rule (Part 3 – Finfish; section 3.17.1(C)):

Possession limit: ~~Three~~ Five (3 ~~5~~) fish per person per day.

1. Licensed party and charter vessels possession limit: ~~Five~~ Seven (5 ~~7~~) fish per person per day.

2. 2026 Recreational Black Sea Bass Management: These options have not yet been approved by ASMFC. Options may change as more information becomes available. Updated information will be provided at the Public Hearing and RIMFC meetings.

- **Proposal 1 (Division/Noticed):** Change the general recreational minimum size and the party/charter season.

Proposed Rule (Part 3 – Finfish; section 3.6.1(A)(1)):

Minimum size: Sixteen ~~and one half~~ inches (16.~~5~~). Minimum size measurement for black sea bass does not include the tendril located on the caudal (tail) fin.

Proposed Rule (Part 3 – Finfish; section 3.6.1(B)(2)):

Season and possession limit:

- a. January 1 through ~~June 17~~ May 21: Closed.
- b. ~~June 18~~ May 22 through August 31: Two (2) fish per person per day.

- **Proposal 2 (Division):** Increase the summer possession limit from 2 fish to 3 fish for both general recreational and licensed party and charter vessels.

Proposed Rule (Part 3 – Finfish; section 3.6.1(A)(2)(b) & 3.61(B)(2)(b)):

General Recreational: May 22 through August 26: ~~Two~~ Three (2 ~~3~~) fish per person per day.

Party/Charter: June 18 through August 31: ~~Two~~ Three (2 ~~3~~) fish per person per day.

- **Proposal 3 (Division):** Decrease the recreational minimum size for licensed party and charter vessels.

Proposed Rule (Part 3 – Finfish; section 3.61(B)(1)):

Minimum size: Sixteen Fifteen and one half inches (~~16 15.5~~"). Minimum size measurement for black sea bass does not include the tendril located on the caudal (tail) fin.

➤ **Proposal 4 (Division):** Change the start date of the summer general recreational season.

Proposed Rule (Part 3 – Finfish; section 3.61(A)(2)):

- a. January 1 through May ~~24~~ 14: Closed.
- b. May ~~22~~ 15 through August 26: Two (2) fish per person per day.

3. **Atlantic Bonito and False Albacore:**

➤ **Proposal 1 (Industry/Noticed):** Amend sub-period possession limits.

Proposed Rule (Part 3 – Finfish; section 3.36.1&3.36.2):

3.36.1 Recreational

- A. Minimum size: Sixteen inches (16").
- B. Season: January 1 through December 31.
- C. Possession limit: Three (3) fish per person per day.

3.36.2 Commercial

- A. Possession limit: The harvest, landing, and possession of Atlantic Bonito and False Albacore in the marine waters of Rhode Island is prohibited while fishing commercially.*

***NOTE:** The original proposal submitted was for both Atlantic Bonito (AB) and False Albacore (FA) commercial fishery landings to be capped at the average over the last 3 years. The proposal maker then requested that an option be added for the average over the last 5 years. In both scenarios (3-year and 5-year averages), for both species, those amounts are too small for DMF to manage. For AB, the 3-year and 5-year averages are 13,189 lbs and 11,658 lbs, respectively. For FA, the 3-year and 5-year averages are 1,707 lbs and 4,628 lbs, respectively.

➤ **Proposal 2 (Division):** Amend sub-period possession limits.

Proposed Rule (Part 3 – Finfish; section 3.36.1&3.36.2):

3.36.1 Recreational

- A. Minimum size: Sixteen inches (16").

- B. Season: January 1 through December 31.
- C. Possession limit: Five (5) fish per person per day.

3.36.2 Commercial

- A. Minimum size: Sixteen inches (16").
- B. Season: January 1 through December 31.

Interested parties are invited to **submit comments concerning the proposed rules through March 6, 2026**. Send comments by mail or email to:

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