Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Division of Marine Fisheries

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Fort Wetherill Marine Laboratory
3 Fort Wetherill Road, Jamestown, RI 02835

Coastal Fisheries Laboratory
1231 Succotash Road, Wakefield, RI 02879

Summary of Comments

Agency: Department of Environmental Management
Division: Marine Fisheries
Regulation: Part 2 – Commercial Marine Fishing Licenses, Landing Permits, and Party and Charter Licenses (250-RICR-90-00-2)

Type of rulemaking: Regular rulemaking w/public hearing

Type of filing: Amendment

Timetable for action on the proposed rule:

- Date of public notice: August 13, 2026
- Date of hearing: September 8, 2026
- End of comment period: September 16, 2026

Proposed rules and comments received:

1. **Multipurpose Vessel License (MVL):**

   - **Proposal 1 (Division):** Extend the current term of the Multipurpose Vessel License for five (5) years and lessen the eligibility requirements consistent with the current activity standard for the issuance of commercial fishing licenses.

     Proposed Rules:

     - *Section 2.7.4(C)(2)(e)(9)*: Term of Multipurpose Vessel License: No Multipurpose Vessel Licenses will be issued after December 31, ~~2026~~ 2031. During the ~~2027~~ 2032 license renewal period, any person who was issued a Multipurpose Vessel License ~~holder in 2026~~ must surrender their Multipurpose Vessel License to be re-issued their consigned Multipurpose Fishing License.
     - *Section 2.7.4(C)(2)(e)(2)(DD):* The Multipurpose Fishing License must meet the standard of actively fished whereby the license holder must have held the license for a minimum of the immediate two (2) ~~in each year for the~~ preceding ~~five (5)~~ calendar years~~. A~~, and demonstrate by dated transaction records, with fishing activity verified by SAFIS dealer or dockside sales reporting, a minimum of forty (40) legal landings ~~over~~ in

the preceding two (2) ~~preceding~~ calendar years, pursuant to a valid Rhode Island license. ~~must have occurred on the same vessel that will be named on the Multipurpose Vessel License.~~

- **Proposal 2 (Industry):** Eliminate the activity standard requirement and lessen the time frame requirement for the fishing business to be in good standing with the state.

  Proposed Rule *(section 2.7.4(C)(2)(e)(2)(DD) and 2.7.4(C)(2)(e)(2)(EE)(i):*
  ~~(DD) The Multipurpose Fishing License must meet the standard of actively fished in each year for the preceding five (5) calendar years. A minimum of forty (40) landings over the two preceding calendar years must have occurred on the same vessel that will be named on the Multipurpose Vessel License.~~

  (EE)(i) The business or corporation must be registered with the State of Rhode Island for the preceding ~~five~~ one (1~~5~~) calendar year~~s~~ and in good standing.

Comments received:

	Support for Proposal 1	Support for Proposal 2	Opposed to Proposal 1	Opposed to Proposal 2	Other
Written*	0	3	1	1	2
Hearing*	0	0	1	1	0

* Note: When the same person provides a comment both orally at the hearing and a written comment, the above tally includes only the written comment.

IMPORTANT! The public hearing was recorded and is publicly available on the Division of Marine Fisheries YouTube channel here. ***This document serves only as a summary of public comments received, as provided in written and orally at the public hearing; it does not include supporting details, rationale, or discussion of matters not specific to the proposed rules.***

Captain Jason Jarvis
70 BEACH ST
WESTERLY, RI 02891

I am concerned about the multipurpose vessel license. I am concerned for the same reasons I originally spoke of when this was first introduced. What is the purpose , who does it benefit, what are the economic and ecological ramifications. Where is this information. Have there been any studies to determine the impact of more large capacity vessels on the beach. No one that fishes in south county will speak or even show up at these meetings. Speaking out will most definitely cause problems . Many fear of being blackballed. We have a limited number of facilities where we can land our fish.

We have an amazing fishery in RI . True diversity. Licenses go to a person not a vessel this is not what we should be doing as a state. Its just another form of consolidating access to a resource. If corporate entities cant find people to run their boats maybe they should sell the boats.

Im not just writing this as a fisherman of almost thirty years, I am also part of a business that has a multipurpose dealers license. We have jumped through a lot of red tape to get to where we are. We need to focus on localizing our seafood production and consumption. Focus on how to find balance in our seafood harvesting. With the current state of the fluke fishery we should be focusing on how to protect a fishery that used to be vibrant . I understand that our quotas came about due to the historical harvest of our trawler fleet. I am grateful for that. But that was also a time of abundance .

We are currently in a time of extreme shifts in fish species. We have a single species fishery “squid” that has been fairly sustainable. But anyone who has been on the water knows , you shouldn’t depend on just one fishery, it could change overnight.

This license sends us down a slippery slope with no guardrails. Part of the Divisions job is to protect the fishery and its participants. That means all participants. I am strongly opposed to this license and know that many others are opposed but are in fear of repercussions from the “company store”, I guess some may not understand that phrase . Im showing my age.

Maybe what we need to focus on is how to get younger folks into the fishery and give them the ability to own a vessel. Unless your family has been in the fishery for a lifetime it is close to impossible for a young person to get into the fishery and own a vessel.

Captain Jason Jarvis
70 BEACH ST
WESTERLY, RI 02891

American Food Partners, Inc.

September 15th, 2026

Dear Director Gray,

The current Multipurpose Vessel License is not working for the Rhode Island seafood industry. Our state is the only state in our region where the MPVL is not tied directly to the boat but rather to an individual. The license also takes too long to obtain as it requires an overly burdensome history timeline. These circumstances create complications where vessels cannot land fluke if they are not able to find an individual with a MPVL to fish on board their vessel. It may also cause challenges where a vessel owner relies on another individual's MPVL without knowing if that license is truly in good standing or tries to get one for themselves but cannot present the fishing history. We feel strongly that it would make more sense if the permit was tied to the vessel and had no history requirement. The current rules prevent some vessels from fishing for fluke. This leaves money on the table for vessel owners, the port of Galilee and the state of RI.

I ask that you consider a change to this rule,

Chris Lee

American Seafood Partners –
Town Dock
Sea Fresh USA
Dave Handrigan Seafood
Cal Marine Seafood
F/V Rayda Cheramie
F/V Second Wind
F/V Estrela do Mare
F/V Lightning Bay
F/V Excalibur
F/V Kassidy Lynn
F/V Cape Blanco
F/V Barbara H
F/V Ferringo Boy

American Food Partners, Inc.

September 14th, 2026

Dear Director Gray,

I am writing to continue our support for creating a more flexible and more attainable Multipurpose Vessel License (MPVL). We have tried several times to make this change and each time there is a new argument from the opposition to not support this.
The MPVL is still so restrictive that only one person has been successful in obtaining one. Contrary to some public comments, it is not for the lack of interest that only one person has applied. We have not applied for the permit because we know we will not qualify.

The vessels that would be applying for this permit are Rhode Island owned vessels. Without this permit, we are not allowed to bring the fluke we catch back to Rhode Island dealers. Instead, we sell to other states who have the flexibility of landing permits and take our commerce there. We are the only state that does not have this flexibility. That is commerce that Rhode Island is losing, from Rhode Island owned vessels. Without this change, Rhode Island is literally turning away their own vessels from their own port.

We ask that the state support Rhode Island vessels and dealers and support Proposal 2: *Eliminate the activity standard requirement and lessen the time frame requirement for the fishing business to be in good standing with the state.*

Thank you for taking the time to consider our request.

Sincerely,

Katie Almeida
Sr. Representative, Government Relations & Sustainability
American Seafood Partners

American Food Partners, Inc.

September 16th, 2026

Director Gray,

The purpose of this comment is to support RIDEM and the MPVL program by supporting **Proposal 2: Eliminate the activity standard requirement and lessen the time frame requirement for the fishing business to be in good standing with the state**.

I own a Multipurpose license that I would like to utilize to put on an RI offshore squid dragger. However, I do not qualify for the strict landings requirements to transfer this license to the vessel. I have watched multiple Point Judith offshore squid draggers be sold to out of state owners and leave the port of Point Juith and never return. This is hurting RI seafood businesses and port landings of fresh seafood. One of the main reasons that I am not purchasing vessels is the lack of qualified captains to run the vessels. A solution to this is to allow someone like me to transfer my license to the vessel, which would allow me to hire either a RI captain or a captain that resides in another state to run the vessel.

Back in the 1990's when I started in the industry, each RI vessel had experienced captains and mates that had the skill and desire to fish those boats safely and effectively. Most of those individuals are now retired and we are lucky to find one RI-based quality captain for each vessel. The opportunity to have quality mates and crew like we had in the past is gone, and there is a shallow pool to draw from.

Very few out of state captains are interested in running RI based fishing boats because they simply cannot bring in restricted finfish to make the trip worthwhile. For example, in the winter if the aggregate is 2000 lbs of fluke, and the dock price is $5/lb, that is $10,000 of additional revenue for the vessel, captain, and crew. Excluding that opportunity for a captain due to his residency being out of state, even though it is a home ported vessel to Rhode Island, disincentivizes the captain to even want to take this vessel fishing. Hence making it hard for owners to hire captains. When owners/captains age out of the fishery, we are hamstrung on replacing them. We have had situations where we would like to hire a non-resident to run an offshore dragger

and train a mate and crew who are Rhode Island based, however without the boat being licensed, this is a non-starter.

To my knowledge, other surrounding states do not have this issue, and we are easily able to license the boat. So, our current RI captains can unload restricted finfish in, say, NY, MA, NC or VA because we have state licenses attached to the boat for those states. In RI, our own home port, we cannot license the vessel effectively under these current regulations.

Also, these offshore draggers are catching fluke, scup, and seabass in federal waters, and generally not dragging in state waters for these fish.

We would like to see modernization with this program so we can keep the fish caught by Rhode Island vessels in Rhode Island, supporting our own fishing industry. Also, reducing the requirements of years in good standing is another sound concept that reduces some of the regulations that we need in order to stay competitive to other states.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Ryan Clark
Executive Chairman

American Seafood Partners
FV Excalibur, FV Lightning Bay, FV Rayda Cheramine, FV Kassidy Lyn, FV Second Wind
The Town Dock
Handrigans Seafood
Sea Fresh USA
Triumph Fisheries

From: Rick Usher
To: DEM Marine Comments
Subject: Comment of Proposed Rule Making - RI Multipurpose License Regulations
Date: Monday, September 14, 2026 9:55:51 AM

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To Whom it May Concern,

I **strongly support** this amendment to the RI Multipurpose regulations. As a RI Multipurpose License holder of # 0144 since 1983, I have kept this license valid through times of full activity and non-activity of commercial fishing. Although I have not had activity in the recent years due to a career change, I plan to become active in the years ahead as I retire from the shoreside regulatory side of fisheries back to commercial fisheries. The satisfaction of completing a day on the water is without a doubt what I enjoy the most. This amendment to the landing requirements is important to allow individuals who may have some years without landings due to personnel reasons to be able to resume utilizing their multipurpose license without concern of losing it for not having enough landings in a particular year. Many factors can influence an individual's fisheries landings such as illness or having to care for a family member, major vessel issues, brief career changes, etc. I have held my multipurpose license in an inactive state for a time now and I am looking forward to utilizing in the near future. This amendment will allow for this, and I ask that it is implemented.

Best Regards,
Richard Usher
90 Jiley Hill Road
Tiverton, RI 02878
774-200-0563

September 15th, 2026

Dear RI DEM,

I am asking DEM to support the commercial fishing industry by supporting Proposal 2 for the MPVL proposal: Eliminate the activity standard requirement and lessen the time frame requirement for the fishing business to be in good standing with the state.

Point Judith is losing money by not making the MPVL more available to the fishing industry. Rhode Island is the only state that does not tie the permit to the vessel. Our need to apply for this permit and its strict qualification requirements is causing vessels to land in other states, turning away commerce that we need. Since this permit has been available, no one has been able to qualify and use it.

We have been trying for years to make this change. We have met with DEM to explain why this is so important to the local industry. There have been minor changes at each step, but no changes that actually make this permit work for the fishing community and we continue to lose money to other states.

I ask that DEM approve an MPVL that WORKS for the fishing industry. We have provided feedback along the way as to what will work for us, and I hope our suggestions are finally implemented into policy. Especially since no one has been able to use the permit as it is.

Thank you,

Pete Raposa
Owner of KSJ Seafood
F/V Oliva & Catherine
F/V Alexis Martina
Narragansett, RI