



## **Status update on proposed regulations concerning Whelks, American Lobsters, Striped Bass Circle Hooks and Horseshoe Crabs.**

DEEP's regulations proposal concerning Commercial and Sportfishing in the Marine District, which proposes changes to fishing rules for whelk, American lobster, striped bass, and horseshoe crab has been submitted to the Legislative Regulation Review Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly for review. It is the responsibility of the Legislative Regulation Review Committee to review regulations proposed by state agencies and approve them before the regulations are implemented to ensure that the proposed regulations do not contravene the legislative intent, or conflict with current state or federal laws, or state or federal constitutions. The Committee will likely consider the proposed regulations at their April meeting, to be held on April 26<sup>th</sup>. More information on the Legislative Regulation Review Committee, including meeting dates and agendas, can be found at this link: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/rr/>

The proposed regulations have been revised in response to comments received during the public comment period. Three specific revisions have been made, all concerning the proposed regulations related to the whelk fishery:

1. The proposed minimum size limit for whelks will be a minimum shell length or shell height, rather than shell length or shell width as originally proposed.
2. The proposal for implementation of a 5-1/2 inch shell length / 3 inch shell width minimum size limit for whelk has been revised. The minimum size limit now proposed for whelk will be 4-3/4 inches shell length or 1-15/16 inches shell height effective August 1, 2022. The minimum shell size length limit will increase in a stepped fashion by 1/4 inches every two years (5 inches effective January 1, 2024, 5-1/4 inches effective January 1, 2026; minimum shell height will also increase in a proportional manner at each two-year step), eventually increasing to 5-1/2 inches shell length / 2-1/4 inches shell height effective January 1, 2028.
3. The proposal now includes a provision permitting licensed whelk fishers to temporarily possess and relocate whelk smaller than the legal limit when fishing within a designated shellfishing area, such that under-sized whelk need not be released directly on to shellfish beds.

All relevant documents including revised proposed regulations are available and can be obtained via the eRegulations system via the following method:

Access the eRegulations system at the following link (<https://eregulations.ct.gov>) on the Secretary of State's website. Under "Quick links" go to "Regulations in Progress" and scroll down to this regulation (tracking number PR2021-027).

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