



Notice to Whelk Fishermen

Changes to whelk fishing rules in Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA) Sections 26-142a-3a, 26-142a-6, and 26-142a-8a were approved by the Connecticut General Assembly Legislative Regulation Review Committee on April 26, 2022, and were finalized by the Secretary of State on May 11, 2022. The new regulations implement the following changes to whelk fishing rules, effective August 1, 2022 (note that the following information paraphrases the new regulations; please refer to the RCSA sections for exact regulatory language):

Section 26-142a-3a. Area-gear restrictions.

- Whelk pot buoys (buoys, not the pots themselves) have been added to the list of fixed commercial gear that may not be set in navigable channels, fairways, or mooring areas.

Section 26-142a-6. Commercial fishing gear specifications.

Whelk pots have been added to the list of defined commercial gear types with the following specifications:

- No person shall use whelk pots except for the taking of whelk (i.e., whelk are the only species that may legally be harvested using whelk pots).
- Whelk pots may not have a volume greater than 22,950 cubic inches and shall have an unobstructed opening on the top of no less than 140 square inches. Each side of the unobstructed opening must be at least 10 inches in length.
- Whelk pots and whelk pot buoys must be marked with the licensee's plate number. License numbers on buoys must be at least $\frac{3}{4}$ -inches in height.
- All whelk pot buoys used by an individual licensee shall be of uniform color and/or pattern, and the licensee shall display one such buoy on their vessel.
- No person shall set or tend whelk pots on a leased shellfish bed without the permission of the lease holder.
- All bait used in a whelk pot shall be wholly contained within a mesh bag.
- No person shall set or tend whelk pots or live cars containing whelk during the period between 30 minutes after sunset and 30 minutes before sunrise.

Section 26-142a-8a. Species restrictions.

- Effective August 1, 2022, the minimum size for both channeled and knobbed whelk is 4-3/4 inches shell length or 1-15/16 inches shell height. The minimum size for both species will increase in future years according to the following schedule:
 - Effective January 1, 2024: 5 inches shell length or 2 inches shell height.
 - Effective January 1, 2026: 5-1/4 inches shell length or 2-1/8 inches shell height.
 - Effective January 1, 2028: 5-1/2 inches shell length or 2-1/4 inches shell height.

- Any whelk taken that are less than the minimum size must be immediately released without avoidable injury, with the following exceptions:
 - Whelk licensees fishing within a designated shellfish area may temporarily possess undersized whelk prior to offload/landing for purposes of releasing such undersized whelk on the same day in an area that is not a designated shellfish area (please refer to RCSA Section 26-142a-8a for additional conditions and exact regulatory language).
 - Holders of a Dept. of Agriculture shellfish license who are in possession of clams or oysters may possess and land undersized whelk provided such undersized whelk are stored in containers with clams and oysters prior to landing, and are then separated from clams and oysters after landing and held in cages stored in sea water and released to Long Island Sound no more than 24 hours after landing (please refer to RCSA Section 26-142a-8a for additional conditions and exact regulatory language; note that a DEEP-issued whelk license is required to be in daily possession of more than a half-bushel of whelk, including possession of undersized whelk under this allowance for Dept. of Agriculture shellfish license holders).

For further information, contact the DEEP Marine Fisheries Program by email at deep.marine.fisheries@ct.gov, by mail at P.O. Box 719, Old Lyme, CT 06371 or by telephone at 860.434.6043 between the hours of 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

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