

## 2026 Commercial Fishery Management Plan

### JANUARY – APRIL

**Summer flounder:** The fishery will open on January 1<sup>st</sup> with a 3,000 pound per bi-weekly (two-week) period landing limit. The limit will be adjusted periodically to maintain a steady landing rate, with the goal of landing not more than 35% of the annual quota through April 30. The first bi-weekly period begins Thursday, January 1<sup>st</sup> and ends Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>. Each subsequent bi-weekly period will begin on Sunday at 0001 hours and end 14 days later on Saturday at 2359 hours. Call-in / Call-out is required prior to departure and again at least two hours prior to offloading. Call EnCon Police at 860.424.3503 (24/7) and provide vessel name, Captain's name, departure date, return date, port of landing and prior to offloading the hail weight of summer flounder onboard. A summer flounder license endorsement is required to land summer flounder.

**Scup (porgy):** Follow Federal Winter 1 Period rules: initially 50,000 pound possession limit, then dropping to 1,000 pounds when 80% of the Period quota has been harvested. No scup license endorsement is required during the Federal Winter 1 or Winter 2 Periods.

**Black sea bass:** The fishery will open on January 1<sup>st</sup> with a 2,000 pound per bi-weekly (two-week) period landing limit. The limit will be adjusted periodically to maintain a steady landing rate, with the goal of landing not more than 30% of the annual quota through April 30. The first bi-weekly period begins Thursday, January 1<sup>st</sup> and ends Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>. Each subsequent bi-weekly period will begin on Sunday at 0001 hours and end 14 days later on Saturday at 2359 hours. A black sea bass license endorsement is required to land sea bass, except that in the commercial lobster fishery when in possession of lobsters, the possession limit is 60 pounds. This does not apply to personal use lobster license holders. Weekly call-in required for landings from lobster pots. Call 860.447.4323 and provide name, plate number, reporting week ending date and total pounds landed from pots during the reporting week. Weekly call-in required for all periods that allow black sea bass from lobster pots.

### MAY - SEPTEMBER

**Scup (porgy):** The Summer Period fishery will open on May 1 with a 1,500 pound possession limit. The possession limit will be adjusted periodically to maintain a steady landing rate and prevent a fishery closure, with the goal of landing 100% of the Summer Period quota by September 30. A scup license endorsement is required to land scup, except a) for restricted commercial fishing license holders, who may possess 100 scup without a scup license endorsement, and b) in the commercial lobster fishery when in possession of lobsters, the possession limit is 10 scup.

### MAY - OCTOBER

**Summer flounder:** The Summer Period fishery will open on May 1 with a 500 pound possession limit. The possession limit will be adjusted periodically to maintain a steady landing rate, with the goal of landing not more than 95% of the annual quota cumulatively through October 31. A summer flounder license endorsement is required to land summer flounder.

**Black sea bass:** The Summer Period fishery will open on May 1 with a 400 pound possession limit. The limit will be adjusted periodically to maintain a steady landing rate, with the goal of landing not more than 100% of the annual quota cumulatively through October 31. A black sea bass license endorsement is required to land sea bass, except that in the commercial lobster fishery when in possession of lobsters, the possession limit is 60 pounds.

### OCTOBER - DECEMBER

**Scup (porgy):** Follow Federal Winter 2 Period rules. During the Federal Winter 2 Period the initial possession limit will be 12,000 pounds. This limit may be adjusted based on Winter 1 fishery performance.

## NOVEMBER - DECEMBER

**Summer flounder:** The Winter 2 Period landing limit will initially be 300 pounds per weekly period. Each weekly period will begin on Sunday at 0001 hours and end 7 days later on Saturday at 2359 hours. The limit will be adjusted periodically to maintain a steady landing rate, with the goal of landing 100% of the annual quota cumulatively by the end of the year. Call-in / Call-out is required prior to departure and again at least two hours prior to offloading. Call EnCon Police at 860.424.3503 (24/7) and provide vessel name, Captain's name, departure date, return date, port of landing and prior to offloading the hail weight of summer flounder onboard. A summer flounder license endorsement is required to land summer flounder.

**Black sea bass:** The Winter 2 Period planned possession limit will be 50 pounds per weekly period. The limit will be adjusted periodically to maintain a steady landing rate, with the goal of landing 100% of the annual quota cumulatively by the end of the year. A black sea bass license endorsement is required to land sea bass, except that in the commercial lobster fishery when in possession of lobsters, the possession limit is 60 pounds. This does not apply to personal use lobster license holders. When 100% of the Connecticut quota is landed the possession limit shall be zero pounds.

## NEW EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1

**Whelk:** Effective January 1, 2026, in accordance with the Regulations of CT State Agencies, Sec. 26-142a-8a(b)(C) the minimum legal length for Channeled Whelk and Knobbed Whelk will increase to: 5-1/4" in shell length or 2-1/8" in shell height.

## ANNUAL

**American eel:** Minimum length is 9 inches.

**American lobster:** The closed season for lobster is September 8 through November 28, both dates inclusive. Minimum size is 3 3/8 inches.

### Atlantic menhaden:

- The possession limit for the commercial harvest of menhaden in CT waters is 12,000 pounds until 90% of the annual quota has been landed.
- For the landing of menhaden taken from outside of CT waters:
  - 120,000 pound possession limit until 75% of the annual quota is landed then;
  - 20,000 pound possession limit until 90% of the quota is landed.
- Once 90% of the annual quota is landed, the directed fishery will be closed and the incidental catch limit will be 6,000 pounds.
- **Call-in required:** To accurately monitor landings and manage the commercial quota, the Marine Fisheries Program and DEEP Environmental Conservation Police have developed a call-in system. When in possession of 6,000 pounds or more of menhaden and *prior to departure and again prior to landing*, fishermen must notify DEEP Environmental Conservation Police Dispatch by telephone at 860.424-3503.

**Bluefish:** 1,000 pound possession limit effective Jan 1. Possession limits will be adjusted periodically to maintain a steady monthly landing rate and prevent in-season closure, with the goal of landing 100% of the annual quota.

**Groundfish:** The following federal commercial minimum lengths are in effect for CT waters: cod (19 in), haddock (16 in), pollock (19 in), witch flounder (13 in), yellowtail flounder (12 in), American plaice (12 in), winter flounder (12 in), and redfish (7 in).

**Jonah crab:** In the commercial fishery no Jonah crab less than 4.75 inches carapace width may be possessed or sold. Possession of egg bearing Jonah crabs or crabs from which the eggs have been removed is prohibited. Jonah crabs must also be landed whole. Landing claws only is prohibited. Possession of more than two loose claws per

body is prohibited. The possession limit in non-trap fisheries is 1,000 crabs. There is no possession limit in the lobster pot fishery (Connecticut licensing statutes do not allow crabs to be taken by pots other than lobster pots.)

**Smooth dogfish:** 500 pound possession limit effective Jan 1. The fishery will close when 100% of the quota has been landed.

**Spiny dogfish:** 7,500 pound possession limit effective Jan 1. Spiny dogfish are managed under a regional annual quota. The fishery will close when 100% of the regional quota has been harvested.

**Tautog:** 10 fish possession limit when fishing under a limited access (moratorium) license, and 3 fish when fishing under a restricted commercial fishing license, creel-limited license or restricted commercial lobster pot license. Open seasons are the months of April, July, August, and between Oct 8 and Dec 24. The minimum size is 16 inches. All commercially harvested Tautog must be tagged with the current calendar year tags provided by the Department.

**Weakfish:** 100 pounds all year.

**Winter flounder:** 50 pounds or 38 fish unless the fish were taken in federal waters under a federal groundfish permit.

All of the possession limits listed above apply to the aggregate of all persons on board the vessel per trip or per day whichever is the longer period of time. Transfer of these species between vessels at sea is prohibited. In any instance where there is a violation of the possession limit on board a vessel carrying more than one person when the catch is commingled, the violation shall be deemed to have been committed by the owner of the vessel, or the operator of the vessel, if the owner is not on board. When any person on a vessel is commercial fishing, the commercial possession limit applies to the entire vessel and no person on that vessel may also possess fish under a recreational creel limit.

**For current commercial fishery trip limits and quota status:**

**See:** <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP-TL> or call 860-434-6374 24/7 for a recorded message of current possession limits.

The Department monitors landings and adjusts trip limits according to Department regulations in an attempt to provide fishing opportunity throughout the year for all participants in the commercial fishery. In addition, the Department strives to provide advance notification of trip limit changes, although this may not always be possible due to rapidly escalating or unanticipated landings. In such circumstances, only a short notification period may be possible.

The information provided in this notice is a summary of possession limits and other general rules only. For complete information on commercial fishing regulations please see: <https://portal.ct.gov/deep-ct-marineinfocircular>, or contact the DEEP Marine Fisheries Program by email at [deep.marine.fisheries@ct.gov](mailto:deep.marine.fisheries@ct.gov), by mail at PO 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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