

BLUEFISH — Recreational Rules

What is being considered?

The Department is considering taking the recreational rules for bluefish out of regulation and establishing the season, size, and catch limit on an annual basis by public notice. There are currently rules established in regulation that may be modified by public notice. This leads to potential confusion because the rule in the public notice does not match the rule in the regulation. While the public notice effectively overrules the regulation, it may still not be fully clear to affected individuals.

The Department would also modify the public notice authority to no longer require publication in a newspaper. All of the Department's public notices are posted on the Fishing Public Notice page and emailed to the Department's email listerv. Most notices are also posted on the Department's social media pages. The Department believes these methods are more effective in reaching affected parties than the legal section of newspapers.

Why is this change necessary?

This change is necessary because the Department has modified the bluefish catch limit by public notice since 2020 and anticipates further changes in the future. In 2019, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council determined that the stock was overfished, although overfishing was not occurring. Recreational catch limits were reduced in 2020 as part of a coast-wide stock rebuilding plan. Recent data indicates that bluefish are no longer overfished but the rebuilding plan will remain in effect until the stock is rebuilt to target levels. By removing the rules from regulation and annually establishing the recreational catch limit, size limit and season in a public notice, the Department hopes to minimize the potential for confusion in the regulated community.

Who will this affect?

Recreational anglers who fish for bluefish.

When would this be effective?

The Department projects that this change could be effective in the spring/summer of 2024. However, the exact date cannot be determined. The Department will follow our normal proposal procedures if this concept moves forward.

Has this change been discussed with stakeholders?

No.