



Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association

8461C Fort Smallwood Road, Suite C • Pasadena, MD 21122 • 410-255-5535 • www.mssa.net

PRESS RELEASE

Saturday, June 5, 2010

MD Votes to Move Forward with Increasing Commercial Striped Bass Quota on Coast

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) voted in May to continue the process towards increasing the commercial quota of striped bass on the coast. Even more alarming is that the Maryland delegation at ASMFC voted favorably on the motion.

In order to increase the commercial coastal quota, one of two things must happen. One, the ASMFC must increase the quota of striped bass taken, or two, take from recreational allocation in order to give it to the commercial side. I see either solution as a problem for recreational fishing and the state of Maryland.

First, if allocation is taken from the recreational side in order to expand the commercial harvest, then it will reduce the opportunities for recreational anglers to keep fish and ultimately reduce the number of anglers fishing our waters. Bag limits, season lengths, or size regulations will have to be adjusted in order to reduce the recreational harvest. At a time when the demand for the fish is growing as a game fish, this only stands to hurt all recreational anglers and the industries that support them.

Secondly, if the overall take is increased in order to expand the commercial quota it shows that our managers view commercial fishing as a greater benefit than that of recreational fishing. I think we can all agree that view is inaccurate and a poor management decision.

When DNR was asked why they supported continuing the process, their response was that they were merely attempting to "be fair", citing the unmatched recreational increase, and this would provide opportunity to bring up bigger issues regarding striped bass. While I agree that this may bring some bigger issues to the table, some that we may or may not want to face (i.e. poaching off Virginia and North Carolina), I don't believe attempting to "be fair" between recreational fishermen and the commercial industries is part of the Maryland DNR vision and mission statement or makes for sound management. According to the DNR website, the vision of the MD DNR is as follows:

"In a sustainable Maryland, we recognize that the health of our society and economy is dependent on the health of our environment. Therefore, we choose to act both collectively and individually to preserve, protect, restore, and enhance our environment for this and future generations."

Given that our managing agency fully recognizes that the health of our society and economy is dependent upon our natural resources and it is their role to ensure a sustainable take from them, I challenge DNR to explain how expanding the commercial quota will benefit our society, whether it be from reducing the recreational take or increasing the overall take of striped bass. Considering the economic value and social benefits of striped bass to our state as a game fish, I cannot see where an increased commercial coastal quota can benefit our state. Let's face it, recreational fishing has had as high as a 1.3 billion dollar impact on our state's economy and benefits our state socially in many of ways, from studies showing fishermen being more concerned with environmental issues to providing relaxation and enjoyment to hundreds of thousands. Neither of these societal benefits can be matched by the commercial fishing market for striped bass. Also considering that the value of striped bass on the commercial market has been "depressed", there is no indication that there is a need for an increase or that the current demand is not being met by the current commercial allocation. Such an increase would only further devalue the take of the fish. While the economic

continued >

impact of recreational fishing has gone down in the state of Maryland in the current economic climate, the demand for striped bass is up. 2009 saw an increase in fishing license sales over 2008 and, let's face it, striped bass are the most sought after fish in our state by recreational anglers.

Despite my concerns and disappointment with the ASMFC vote and its support by the Maryland delegation, we have to deal with the cards that have been dealt and respond appropriately. This process toward the increase in coastal commercial quota is now out for public comment. It is up to us to make our voices clear on this issue.

How to Respond:

There are a number of ways Maryland anglers can voice their opinions. The first is by emailing the ASMFC and Maryland DNR directly at nmeserve@asmfc.org or MD DNR at toconnell@dnr.state.md.us. You may use the form letter below and make any edits you wish. Simply highlight the text, COPY, and then PASTE to your email. *****Make sure to change the name and date on the letter.**

Your second option is to show up at a public hearing. There are two convenient locations for anglers to attend. They are:

June 17th, at (7 PM): ASMFC Public Hearing on Draft Addendum II to Amendment 6 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Striped Bass, Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources, Ocean Pines Library, 11107 Cathell Road, Berlin, Maryland. For more information, please contact Carrie Kennedy at (410) 260-8295.

OR

July 19th (6 PM): ASMFC Public Hearing on Draft Addendum II to Amendment 6 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Striped Bass, Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources, Tawes State Office Building, C1 Conf. Room, 580 Taylor Avenue, Annapolis, Maryland. For more information, please contact Carrie Kennedy at (410) 260-8295

I certainly hope all Maryland recreational anglers see the potential ill-effects and precedent such a measure will have and contribute opposition to this proposed regulation. Please feel free to contact Dave Smith at the MSSA with any questions. You may use any of the above language in your response letter to ASMFC and our Maryland delegation.

Dave Smith

Executive Director