



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Approves Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass: *Amendment Strengthens Measures to Support Stock Rebuilding*

Arlington, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass. The Amendment establishes new requirements for the following components of the FMP: management triggers, conservation equivalency, measures to address recreational release mortality, and the stock rebuilding plan. The last striped bass stock assessment found the stock was overfished and that overfishing was occurring. This finding required the Board to end overfishing within one year and rebuild the stock by 2029. Amendment 7 strengthens the Commission’s ability to reach the rebuilding goal by implementing a more conservative recruitment trigger, providing more formal guidance around uncertainty in the management process, and implementing measures designed to reduce recreational release mortality. This Amendment builds upon the Addendum VI action to address overfishing and initiate rebuilding in response to the assessment findings.

“On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this amendment process over the past few years to address these critically important management issues. This includes ASMFC staff, and the state and federal partners who served on all the various committees involved in the development of Amendment 7, as well as the Advisory Panel. I would especially like to acknowledge former Board Chair David Borden of Rhode Island for his leadership throughout much of the process,” stated Board Chair Marty Gary with the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. “Stakeholders clearly voiced their dedication and commitment to the conservation of this species through the thousands of comments we received. The Board is grateful for this tremendous public participation and believe that the actions we took through Amendment 7 are reflective of the majority of stakeholders’ priorities. The Board remains focused on rebuilding this iconic species.”

Amendment 7 establishes an updated recruitment management trigger, which determines when the Board is required to make management adjustments based on striped bass young-of-the-year data.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

The updated recruitment trigger is more sensitive to low recruitment than the previous trigger, and it requires a specific management response to low year class strength. The response requires reevaluation of the fishing mortality management triggers to account for low recruitment. If one of those triggers trips after reevaluation, the Board is required to take action to reduce fishing mortality.

Amendment 7 also updates the spawning stock biomass triggers by establishing a deadline for implementing a rebuilding plan. The Board must implement a rebuilding plan within two years of when a spawning stock biomass trigger is tripped.

For conservation equivalency (CE), which provides states the flexibility to tailor management measures, Amendment 7 does not allow CE to be used for most recreational striped bass fisheries when the stock is overfished. Amendment 7 also provides constraints around the use of Marine Recreational Information Program data for CE proposals and defines the overall percent reduction/liberalization a proposal must achieve, including required uncertainty buffers. These restrictions are intended to minimize the risks due to uncertainty when CE is used for non-quota managed striped bass fisheries.

Since recreational release mortality is a large component of annual fishing mortality, Amendment 7 establishes a new gear restriction which prohibits gaffing striped bass when fishing recreationally. This new restriction, along with the existing circle hook requirement when fishing recreationally with bait, are intended to increase the chance of survival after a striped bass is released alive. Additionally, Amendment 7 requires striped bass caught on any unapproved method of take (e.g., caught on a J-hook with bait) must be returned to the water immediately without unnecessary injury. This provision, which is related to incidental catch, was previously a recommendation in Addendum VI to Amendment 6.

For stock rebuilding, Amendment 7 addresses the upcoming 2022 stock assessment and how it will inform efforts to meet the 2029 stock rebuilding deadline. Given concerns about recent low recruitment and the possibility of continued low recruitment, Amendment 7 requires the 2022 stock assessment's rebuilding projections to use a low recruitment assumption to conservatively account for that future possibility. Amendment 7 also establishes a mechanism for the Board to respond more quickly to the 2022 assessment results if action is needed to achieve stock rebuilding by 2029.

All provisions of Amendment 7 are effective immediately except for gear restrictions. States must implement gear restrictions by January 1, 2023. Amendment 7 will be available on the Commission's website, <http://www.asmfc.org/species/atlantic-striped-bass>, by the end of May. For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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