



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

**FROM:** Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel

**DATE:** January 18, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Advisory Panel Comments on the Scope of New Options for Draft Amendment 7

*AP Members in Attendance:* Louis Bassano (Chair, NJ – recreational), Dave Pecci (ME – for-hire/recreational), Bob Humphrey (ME – comm. rod and reel/for-hire), Peter Whelan (NH – recreational), Patrick Paquette (MA – rec/for-hire/comm), Andy Dangelo (RI – for-hire), Michael Plaia (RI – comm/rec/for-hire), Bob Danielson (NY – recreational), Eleanor Bochenek (NJ – fisheries scientist), Chris Dollar (MD – fishing guide), Charles Green (MD – for-hire), Bill Hall (VA – recreational), Kelly Place (VA – commercial), Jon Worthington (NC – recreational)

*ASMFC Staff:* Emilie Franke, Katie Drew

The Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel (AP) met via webinar on January 6, 2022 to provide feedback on the new options developed for Draft Amendment 7 following the October 2021 Striped Bass Management Board meeting: fishing mortality management triggers, measures to protect strong year classes (recreational size limits), and stock rebuilding considerations. The following is a summary of the AP's comments and discussion on the scope and clarity of those new options.

The AP previously met on September 29, 2021 to provide feedback on the scope and clarity of the other options presented in Draft Amendment 7, including management triggers, options to address recreational release mortality, and conservation equivalency<sup>1</sup>.

After Draft Amendment 7 is approved for public comment, there will be a separate AP meeting to discuss the AP's preferred management options.

### **Fishing Mortality (F) Threshold Management Trigger Options**

- One AP member noted concern about waiting two or three years for more data before taking action to reduce F, and so does not support the alternative F threshold trigger options that would require two or three years of data to evaluate the trigger (i.e.,

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<sup>1</sup> The September 2021 Striped Bass AP Meeting Summary is available here:  
[http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/61829cd2AtlStripedBassAP\\_Summary\\_Sept2021.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/61829cd2AtlStripedBassAP_Summary_Sept2021.pdf)

comparing a 2-yr or 3-yr average F to the threshold instead of the status quo comparing one year of F to the threshold).

- Some AP members support considering the 2-yr and 3-yr average options during the public comment period to address concerns about MRIP uncertainty and variability of F from year to year.

### **Measures to Protect Strong Year Classes (Recreational Size/Bag Limits for Ocean and Chesapeake Bay)**

- One AP member supports removing these recreational size limit options from consideration in Draft Amendment 7 for the following reasons:
  - The status quo would provide the same rebuilding benefit for the stock as the alternative measures.
  - The process of adjusting to changes in recreational measures is costly for the fishery, particularly for the for-hire industry.
- Several AP members support keeping these recreational size limit options in Draft Amendment 7 for public comment for the following reasons:
  - The public should have the opportunity to comment on alternative size limits and what they want to see in the fishery.
  - Some alternative size limit options would result in a greater reduction in harvest than the status quo; reducing harvest would benefit the stock.
  - Some alternative size limits may reduce release mortality (e.g., fewer fish would be caught and released to find one in a 32" to <40" slot vs. the status quo).
- Some AP members noted diverse age structure is important to consider.
  - Staff indicated the analysis for these options focused on whether the alternative size limits would expedite stock rebuilding based on total spawning stock biomass levels; this analysis did not consider how the age composition of the stock would change as compared to the status quo.
- Some AP members noted effort and behavior may change with different size limits.
  - Staff indicated there is uncertainty around how effort would change with a different size limit and if fish become more or less available to the fishery; this uncertainty cannot be quantified.
- Some AP members highlighted the weak stock-recruit relationship for striped bass (i.e., higher spawning stock biomass does not necessarily lead to higher recruitment) and the influence of environmental conditions on recruitment; although alternative size limits may not significantly increase total SSB levels, protecting strong year classes may still benefit the stock overall by limiting mortality on healthy year classes considering future recruitment success is highly variable.
- One AP member noted closed seasons would protect year classes.
- Some AP members noted the potential relationship between protecting larger fish and the quality of eggs/recruits.

### **Options for Stock Rebuilding Calculations**

- Two AP members noted support for the more conservative approach of using a low recruitment assumption for stock rebuilding calculations in the 2022 assessment, especially considering the recent low juvenile abundance index (JAI) estimates.
- There was general support for including these options considering rebuilding calculations and recruitment in the Draft Amendment for public comment.

### ***Written Comments from AP Member***

AP member Dennis Fleming (PRFC – fishing guide/seafood processor/dealer) was not in attendance and provided the following comments to ASMFC staff regarding the AP meeting summary:

- I support the following: Some AP members support considering the 2-year and 3-year average options during the public comment period to address concerns about MRIP uncertainty and variability of F from year to year.
- I support the following: Several AP members support keeping these recreational size limit options in Draft Amendment 7 for public comment for the following reasons.
- I support the following: Two AP members noted support for the more conservative approach of using a low recruitment estimate for the stock rebuilding calculations in the 2022 assessment, especially considering the recent low juvenile abundance index estimates.