Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board; Atlantic Striped Bass Plan Development Team**

FROM: **Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel**

DATE: **October 12, 2021**

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

AP Members in Attendance: 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), Kyle Douton (CT – recreational), Al Ristori (NJ – for-hire), Chris Dollar (MD – fishing guide), Dennis Fleming (PRFC – fishing guide/seafood processer/dealer), 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 September 29, 2021 to provide feedback on the options developed for Draft Amendment 7, including the scope and clarity of the options presented. The following is a summary of the AP's comments and discussion for each issue.

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

General Comments

- The AP noted overall concern about the complexity of the draft document and the large number of options presented, which would be difficult to present at public hearings and would make the public comment process challenging.

Management Trigger Options

- Some AP members noted concern about options that would eliminate one of the SSB triggers given the importance of these triggers in the management program.
- AP members noted general concern about options that would allow the Board to defer management action until the next stock assessment. The AP noted there is already public concern about the Board not responding quickly enough to management triggers, and these options would delay the timeline for management response even further.

- AP question for PDT: Why is there no option for the SSB target trigger to trip after two consecutive years?
    - If the PDT already considered this, the AP recommends the PDT be prepared to provide their rationale to the Board and the public; there may be questions since there is an SSB target trigger option for three consecutive years, but there is no option for two consecutive years.
    - Staff indicated the PDT would follow-up to provide rationale.
- AP question for PDT: Is there redundancy between the SSB target trigger options and the management action deferment options?
    - The AP noted there are multiple options in those categories that address both the SSB target and the F target, and may seem redundant.
    - Staff indicated the PDT would follow-up to provide clarity on these options.
- AP question for science staff: Is there updated information on retrospective bias in the striped bass stock assessment?
    - Dr. Katie Drew indicated the striped bass stock assessment models have a retrospective pattern where fishing mortality tends to be slightly overestimated and spawning stock biomass tends to be slightly underestimated. She will follow-up with more detail on how the retrospective pattern has changed over time.

Measures to Protect the 2015 Year Class (Ocean Recreational Fishery Size Limit Options)

- One AP member recommended the PDT streamline this section of the document to better integrate the tables and figures; additionally, adding a table showing the estimated size-at-age in inches would be helpful.
- One AP member noted the moratorium option should more clearly specify which moratorium timelines are being considered (e.g. 2 years? 5 years?).
- AP members also noted the following concerns about the size/slot options:
    - Some AP members noted concern from the for-hire industry about slot limit options and a large minimum size option and associated negative impacts on the industry.
    - Some AP members noted support for the 35-inch minimum size option considering the simplicity for compliance and enforcement as compared to a slot limit.
    - Some AP members noted concern about higher discards associated with slot limits.

Recreational Release Mortality Options

- Seasonal closure options:
    - There was some concern about state coordination and accountability associated with the regional closure option. AP members noted the regional closure option should clearly specify how the regions would be defined.
    - Some AP members noted that even a 2-week closure could have a significant, negative impact on fishing businesses, particularly in northern states.

    - There was some support for using MRIP effort data to inform closure options, but there was a question and concern about high PSEs and whether the directed trip percentages are accurate, especially for the ocean regions of Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.
- Gear restriction options:
    - Most AP members expressed significant concern about including the gear restriction options. The AP noted the following concerns:
        - The list of gear restriction options seems to target certain types of businesses and would negatively impact a specific component of the recreational sector.
        - Gear is used differently across states and the benefits of a gear restriction would vary widely and cannot be measured.
        - There are continued concerns about enforcement of gear restrictions.
        - The Addendum VI circle hook requirement was informed by relatively more research and more widespread public support; the gear restriction options presented in Draft Amendment 7 do not have the same support or scientific backing.
    - AP Question for PDT: How was this list of gear restrictions identified?
        - Staff indicated these options were based on public comment received on the Draft Amendment 7 Public Information Document and Addendum VI.
- Outreach options:
    - One AP member noted that any required outreach should be more clearly defined and should be focused on best practices for handling of large fish, especially trophy fish.

Conservation Equivalency (CE) Options

- Some AP members noted the importance of accountability and associated concern that CE accountability measures are not included in the draft options.
    - Staff indicated the rationale for not including accountability options could be noted the draft document. Accountability options were not developed due to the challenge of separating the performance of management measures from factors like changes in angler behavior and fish availability. This makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of CE programs, so the PDT focused on options on the front end of the CE process, like options to restrict when CE can be used and requirements for CE proposals.
- One AP member noted general concern about using MRIP for CE proposals and whether a PSE threshold of 50 is still too high.