



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

**FROM:** Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee

**DATE:** January 28, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Recommendation on Stock Assessment Schedule

The Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee (TC) and Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) met via webinar on January 14, 2025 to review the timeline for the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment and discuss concerns about a potential 2026 stock assessment update.

The 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment is scheduled for peer review through the Northeast (NRCC) Research Track assessment process in March 2027 and will be presented to the Board in May or August 2027 depending on the availability of the peer review report (Table 1). Work on the benchmark stock assessment will begin over the next few months with the Data Workshop expected this Summer 2025. The benchmark assessment will include data through 2025, including the re-calibrated MRIP time series expected to be released in Spring 2026 based on NOAA Fisheries' evaluation of potential bias in the Fishing Effort Survey.

In addition to the 2027 Benchmark Assessment, a 2026 stock assessment update is tentatively scheduled per the typical two-year schedule for striped bass following the 2024 Stock Assessment Update. The TC-SAS discussed concerns about the timing of a 2026 Stock Assessment Update since it would directly overlap with work on the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment, specifically overlapping with the benchmark's Assessment Workshop and development of the benchmark report. If a 2026 assessment update were conducted, the TC-SAS would not only be simultaneously working on two different assessments with potentially two different models but would also have to submit data earlier in the year to complete both assessments. This would be particularly challenging since the MRIP data being released in 2026 will be a new, re-calibrated time series.

A 2026 stock assessment update would be presented to the Board in October 2026, which would be followed only ~6-8 months later by the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment. The results of a 2026 stock assessment update would quickly be replaced by the 2027 Benchmark Assessment with a potentially new assessment model and reference points.

The completion of any assessment is highly dependent on the contributions of the TC and SAS. These committee members have other obligations in addition to striped bass and may not have the bandwidth to dedicate the time needed for both an update and benchmark to be completed so close together.

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**For these reasons, the TC-SAS recommends not conducting a 2026 stock assessment update for striped bass.** The TC-SAS can provide the Board with data check-ins throughout the benchmark assessment process (e.g., summary of removals and key indices) as well as updated projections when preliminary 2025 data are available if desired, but emphasizes the priority should be completing the 2027 Benchmark Assessment to inform future management.

Table 1. 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment Timeline for Atlantic Striped Bass

	<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
✓	Initial TC call to review timeline	Jan. 14, 2025
	TC Call to review TORs	March 2025
	TORs and SAS presented to Board for approval	May 2025
	2024 Data Submission Deadline	June 15, 2025
	<b>Data Workshop</b>	<b>July/August 2025</b>
	<b>Methods Workshop</b>	<b>December 2025</b>
	2025 Data Submission Deadline	June 15, 2026
	<b>Assessment Workshop</b>	<b>August 2026</b>
	Report Components to Staff	Oct. 1, 2026
	Final Report to SAS	Nov. 1, 2026
	SAS call to approve report for TC review	Dec. 1, 2026
	Report to TC for review	Dec. 15, 2026
	<b>TC Call to Approve Report</b>	<b>Week of January 18, 2027</b>
	Report to review panel	Last week of February 2027
	<b>Peer Review Workshop</b>	<b>Mid-March 2027</b>
	Report to Board (Meeting Materials)	Mid-April or Mid-July 2017
	<b>Assessment presented at Spring/Summer Meeting</b>	<b>First week of May or August 2027</b>