

January 17, 2018

Tina Berger, Director of Communications
Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 N. Highland Street
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Tina and Max,

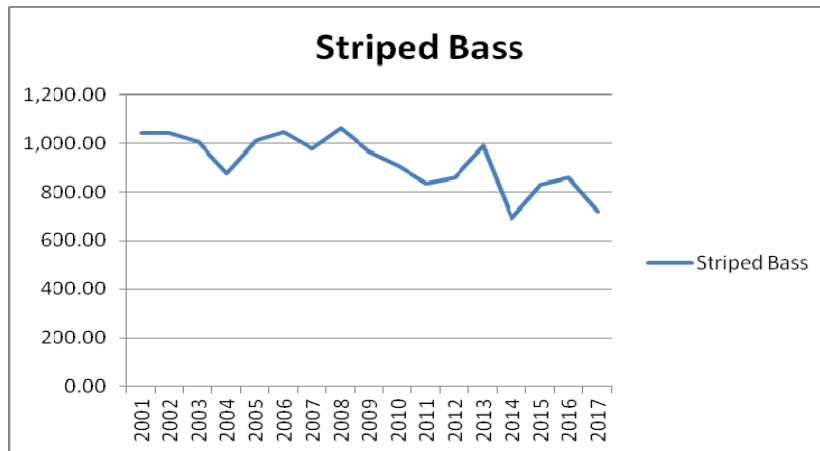
I am writing this letter to the Striped Bass Management Board in the hopes that it can serve as another data point as they consider future striped bass management approaches. As a bit of background, for the past several years I have served as the Contest Officer for the NY Surf Fishing Contest. The contest has been in existence since 1980 and in this year's contest we had 12 fishing clubs participate and 287 eligible anglers. The clubs are all located on Long Island. The contest area extends from the Tappan Zee Bridge south to NYC and east to Montauk and Orient Points. A large percentage of anglers in the contest are serious hard-core surfcasters and most follow a catch and release ethic - in 2017, 96% of all striped bass were released. To qualify for the NY Surf Fishing Contest, striped bass must weigh a minimum of 10 pounds.

While large numbers of significant striped bass were taken in the Cape Cod Canal throughout the summer and by boats during the moon tides in the rips off Montauk, the Long Island shoreline was sparse for many surfcasters. In 2017 the Contest experienced a significant decline over 2016 levels. The results included:

- The average striped bass points per club decreased 16.6% from 2016 levels.
- Average bluefish points were down 16.9% over 2016 levels.
- The average size of striped bass entered was 16.0 pounds compared to 18.8 lbs in 2016.
- The number of significant striped bass entered (20+ lbs) declined by 47.3% over 2016.
- The total points of the Top Five Anglers saw a 32% decrease from 2016.
- The total points of the Top Five Clubs saw a 25% decrease from 2016.
- The total release points of the Top Three clubs saw a 64% decrease from 2016.
- For the third consecutive year the Montauk "Fall Run" never materialized with a total of only 13 striped bass entered from Montauk in the months of October and November.

While the *catch per unit effort* or the amount of effort required to catch fish is difficult to quantify, to a man, the great majority of anglers queried reported needing to invest substantially more time on the water in 2017 in an attempt to catch a similar amount of qualifying fish compared to previous years.

The following chart shows the NYSFC historical accounting of average club striped bass point totals from 2001-2017.



We did see good numbers of 14"-22" inch striped bass during late October and through the end of our contest on November 30th. These fish and the other above average year classes over the past few years in the Chesapeake and the Hudson should be protected.

It is the hope of the NY Surf Fishing Contest that Board Members take this data into consideration as striped bass fisheries management decisions are considered. We see no justification at this time for an easing of the current striped bass regulations that would result in increased harvests.

I appreciate your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Ross Squire
NY Surf Fishing Contest
Contest Officer

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