Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

ISFMP Policy Board Webinar Summary

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

ISFMP Policy Board Webinar
July 14, 2020

Toni Kerns, ISFMP, or
Tina Berger, Communications
For more information, please contact
the identified individual at
703.842.0740

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ISFMP POLICY BOARD (JULY 14, 2020)

Meeting Summary

The Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board met to review and consider guidance from the Executive Committee regarding the possibility of allowing states to adjust their 2020 recreational measures to provide relief for lost fishing opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In developing the guidelines, the Executive Committee recognized the significant impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on U.S. fisheries. While funds from the CARES Act will begin to provide some relief to the industry, including for-hire businesses within the recreational fishing sector, the funds may not make those businesses whole. The Committee is recommending states be allowed to submit proposals to adjust individual species 2020 recreational measures. Concerned about setting a precedence regarding modifying in-season regulations to address lost fishing opportunity, the Committee recommended that any submitted proposals would be reviewed by the species technical committee and board, are limited to fisheries that meet the criteria below, and are specifically in response to the global pandemic (proposals that seek to adjust recreational measures due to poor weather conditions, limited fish availability, or other non-COVID related issues will not be considered).

- There was civil emergency action, or other state or federal action due to the COVID-19 pandemic that closed recreational fishing, this can include mode specific closures.
- Verification that the state made a good effort to enforce the closure.
- Proposals may only adjust season length, no other measures may be adjusted.
- The species is not overfished and/or overfishing is not occurring.

After a lengthy discussion that considered the pros and cons of allowing states to modify regulations in response to missed fishing opportunities resulting from COVID-19, the Policy Board decided to not approve the guidance as presented by the Executive Committee. Its decision was largely based on concern about: (1) setting a precedence for allowing states to adjust measures in-season based on lost fishing opportunities; and (2) overburdening the species technical committees with evaluating the impacts to the fishery and stock given the lack of complete MRIP data. Additionally, members expressed concern about the unknown and unquantifiable impacts of private angler and shore-based fishing effort on the stocks. It was noted that states have the ability to submit proposed changes to their recreational measures following the guidelines outlined in the Commission's Conservation Equivalency Policy and Technical Guidance Document.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to approve the guidance from the Executive Committee for states submitting proposals to adjust individual species 2020 recreational measures to address lost fishing opportunity due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion fails (5 in favor, 9 opposed).