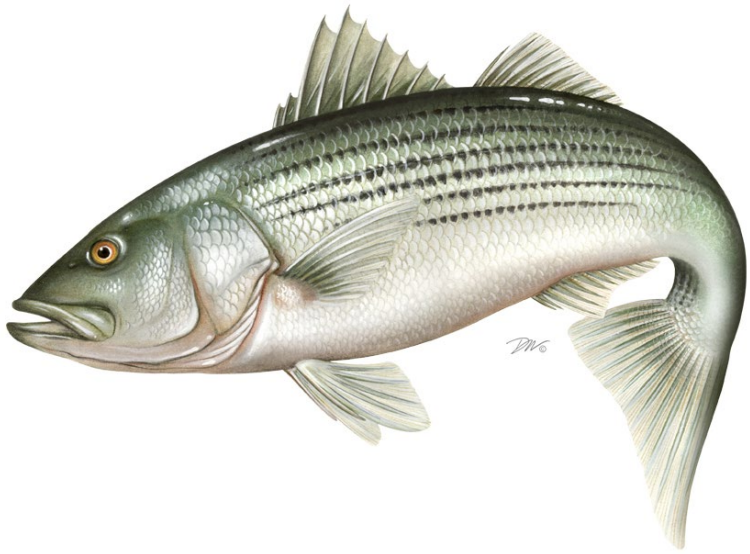
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

REVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS
(Morone saxatilis)

2024 FISHING YEAR



For Board Review
July 2025

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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I. Status of the Fishery Management Plan

Date of FMP Approval:	Original FMP – 1981
Amendments:	Amendment 1 – 1984 Amendment 2 – 1984 Amendment 3 – 1985 Amendment 4 – 1989; Addendum I – 1991, Addendum II – 1992, Addendum III – 1993, Addendum IV – 1994 Amendment 5 – 1995; Addendum I – 1997, Addendum II – 1997, Addendum III – 1998, Addendum IV – 1999, Addendum V – 2000 Amendment 6 – 2003; Addendum I – 2007, Addendum II – 2010, Addendum III – 2012, Addendum IV – 2014, Addendum VI -2019 Amendment 7 – 2022; Addendum I – 2023
Management Unit:	Migratory stocks of Atlantic striped bass from Maine through North Carolina
States With Declared Interest:	Maine - North Carolina, including Pennsylvania
Additional Jurisdictions:	District of Columbia, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, National Marine Fisheries Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Active Boards/Committees:	Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board, Advisory Panel, Technical Committee, Stock Assessment Subcommittee, Tagging Subcommittee, Plan Review Team, and Plan Development Team

Original FMP and Amendments 1-5

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) developed a Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass in 1981 in response to poor juvenile recruitment and declining landings. The FMP recommended increased restrictions on commercial and recreational fisheries, such as minimum size limits and harvest closures on spawning grounds. Two amendments were passed in 1984 recommending additional management measures to reduce fishing mortality. To strengthen the management response and improve compliance and enforcement, the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act (P.L. 98-613) was passed in late 1984. The Striped Bass Act[1] mandated the implementation of striped bass regulations passed by the Commission and gave the Commission authority to recommend to the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior that states be found out of compliance when they failed to implement management measures consistent with the FMP.

[1] The 1997 reauthorization of the Striped Bass Act also required the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior provide a biennial report to Congress highlighting the progress and findings of studies of migratory and estuarine Striped Bass. The ninth such report was recently provided to Congress (Shepherd et al. 2017).

The first enforceable plan under the Striped Bass Act, Amendment 3, was approved in 1985, and required size regulations to protect the 1982 year-class – the first modest size cohort since the previous decade. The objective was to increase size limits to allow at least 95% of the females in the 1982 year-class to spawn at least once. Smaller size limits were permitted in producer areas than along the coast. Several states, beginning with Maryland in 1985, opted for a more conservative approach and imposed a total moratorium on striped bass landings for several years. The amendment contained a trigger mechanism to relax regulations when the 3-year moving average of the Maryland juvenile abundance index (JAI) exceeded an arithmetic mean of 8.0 – which was attained with the recruitment of the 1989 year-class. Also, in 1985, the Commission determined the Albemarle Sound-Roanoke River (A-R) stock in North Carolina contributed minimally to the coastal migratory population, and was therefore allowed to operate under an alternative management program.

Amendment 4, implemented in 1989, aimed to rebuild the resource rather than maximize yield. The amendment allowed state fisheries to reopen under a target fishing morality (F) of 0.25, which was half the estimated F needed to achieve maximum sustainable yield (MSY). The amendment allowed an increase in the target F once spawning stock biomass (SSB) was restored to levels estimated during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The dual size limit concept was maintained (coastal versus producer areas), and a recreational trip limit and commercial season was implemented to reduce the harvest to 20% of that in the historic period of 1972-1979. A series of four addenda were implemented from 1990-1994 to maintain protection of the 1982 year-class.

In 1990, to provide additional protection to striped bass and ensure the effectiveness of state regulations, NOAA Fisheries passed a final rule (55 Federal Register 40181-02) prohibiting possession, fishing (catch and release fishing), harvest, and retention of Atlantic striped bass in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), with the exception of a defined transit zone within Block Island Sound. Atlantic striped bass may be transported through this defined area provided that the vessel is not used to fish while in the EEZ and the vessel remains in continuous transit, and that the fish were legally caught in adjoining state waters.

In 1995, the Atlantic striped bass migratory stock was declared recovered by the Commission (the A-R stock was declared recovered in 1997) and Amendment 5 was adopted to increase the target F to 0.33, midway between the existing F target (0.25) and F_{MSY}. Target F was allowed to increase again to 0.40 after two years of implementation. Regulations were developed to achieve the target F (which included measures to restore commercial harvest to 70% of the average landings during the 1972-1979 historical period) and states were allowed to submit proposals to implement alternative regulations that were deemed conservationally equivalent to the Amendment 5 measures. From 1997-2000, a series of five addenda were implemented to respond to the latest stock status information and adjust the regulatory program to achieve each change in target F.

<u>Amendment 6</u>

In 2003, Amendment 6 was adopted to address five limitations within the existing management program: 1) potential inability to prevent the Amendment 5 exploitation target from being exceeded; 2) perceived decrease in availability or abundance of large striped bass in the coastal migratory population; 3) a lack of management direction with respect to target and threshold biomass levels; 4)

inequitable effects of regulations on the recreational and commercial fisheries, and coastal and producer area sectors; and 5) excessively frequent changes to the management program. Accordingly, Amendment 6 completely replaced the existing FMP for Atlantic striped bass.[2]

The goal of Amendment 6 is "to perpetuate, through cooperative interstate management, migratory stocks of striped bass; to allow commercial and recreational fisheries consistent with the long-term maintenance of a broad age structure, a self-sustaining spawning stock; and also to provide for the restoration and maintenance of their essential habitat." In support of this goal, the following objectives are included:

1. Manage striped bass fisheries under a control rule designed to maintain stock size at or above the target female spawning stock biomass level and a level of fishing mortality at or below the target exploitation rate.
2. Manage fishing mortality to maintain an age structure that provides adequate spawning potential to sustain long-term abundance of striped bass populations.
3. Provide a management plan that strives, to the extent practical, to maintain coastwide consistency of implemented measures, while allowing the States defined flexibility to implement alternative strategies that accomplish the objectives of the FMP.
4. Foster quality and economically viable recreational, for-hire, and commercial fisheries.
5. Maximize cost effectiveness of current information gathering and prioritize state obligations in order to minimize costs of monitoring and management.
6. Adopt a long-term management regime that minimizes or eliminates the need to make annual changes or modifications to management measures.
7. Establish a fishing mortality target that will result in a net increase in the abundance (pounds) of age 15 and older striped bass in the population, relative to the 2000 estimate.

Amendment 6 modified the F target and threshold, and introduced a new set of biological reference points (BRPs) based on female SSB, as well as a list of management triggers based on the BRPs. The coastal commercial quotas were restored to 100% of the states' average landings during the 1972-1979 historical period, except for Delaware's coastal commercial quota which remained at the level allocated in 2002[3]. In the recreational fisheries, all states were required to implement a two-fish bag limit with a minimum size limit of 28 inches, except for the Chesapeake Bay fisheries, North Carolina fisheries that operate in the A-R, and states with approved alternative regulations. The Chesapeake Bay and A-R regulatory programs were predicated on a more conservative F target than the coastal

[2] While NOAA Fisheries continues to implement a complete ban on the fishing and harvest of striped bass in the EEZ, Amendment 6 includes a recommendation to consider reopening the EEZ to striped bass fisheries. In September 2006, NOAA Fisheries concluded that it would be imprudent to open the EEZ to striped bass fishing because it could not be certain that opening the EEZ would not lead to increased effort and an overfishing scenario.

[3] The decision to hold Delaware's commercial quota at the 2002 level is based on tagging information that indicated F on the Delaware River/Bay stock is too high, and uncertainty regarding the status of the spawning stock for the Delaware River/Bay.

migratory stock, which allowed these states/jurisdictions (hereafter states) to implement separate seasons, harvest caps, and size and bag limits as long as they remain under that F target. No minimum size limit can be less than 18 inches under Amendment 6. The same minimum size standards regulate the commercial fisheries as the recreational fisheries, except for a minimum 20 inch size limit in the Delaware Bay spring American shad gillnet fishery.

States are permitted the flexibility to deviate from these regulations by submitting conservation equivalency proposals to the Plan Review Team (PRT). All proposals are subject to technical review and approval by the Atlantic Striped Bass Management (Board). It is the responsibility of the state to demonstrate through quantitative analysis that the proposed management program is equivalent to the standards in the FMP, or will not contribute to the overfishing of the resource.

Five addenda to Amendment 6 have been implemented. Addendum I, approved in 2007, established a bycatch monitoring and research program to increase the accuracy of data on striped bass discards and recommended development of a web-based angler education program. Also in 2007, President George W. Bush issued an Executive Order (E.O. 13449) prohibiting the sale of striped bass (and red drum) caught within the EEZ. Addendum II was approved in 2010 and established a new definition of recruitment failure such that each index would have a fixed threshold rather than a threshold that changes annually with the addition of each year's data. Addendum III was approved in 2012 and requires all states with a commercial fishery for striped bass to implement a uniform commercial harvest tagging program. The Addendum was initiated in response to significant poaching events in the Chesapeake Bay and aims to limit illegal harvest of striped bass.

Addendum IV was triggered in response to the 2013 benchmark assessment, which indicated a steady decline in SSB since the mid-2000s. The Addendum established new F reference points, and changed commercial and recreational measures to reduce F to a level at or below the new target. Chesapeake Bay fisheries were required to implement lower reductions than coastal states (20.5% compared to 25%) since their fisheries were reduced by 14% in 2013 based on their management program. The addendum maintained the flexibility to implement alternative regulations through the conservation equivalency process. This practice has resulted in a variety of regulations among states. All states promulgated regulations prior to the start of their 2015 seasons.

Addendum VI was initiated in response to the 2018 benchmark assessment which indicated the stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing[4]. Approved in October 2019, the Addendum aimed to reduce total removals by 18% relative to 2017 levels in order to achieve F target in 2020. Specifically, the

[4] In February 2017, the Board initiated development of Draft Addendum V to consider liberalizing coastwide commercial and recreational regulations. The Board's action responded to concerns raised by Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions regarding continued economic hardship endured by its stakeholders since the implementation of Addendum IV and information from the 2016 stock assessment update indicating that F was below target in 2015, and that total removals could increase by 10% to achieve the target F. However, the Board chose to not advance the draft addendum for public comment largely due to harvest estimates having increased in 2016 without changing regulations. Instead, the Board decided to wait until it reviews the results of the 2018 benchmark stock assessment before considering making changes to the management program.

Addendum reduced all state commercial quotas by 18%, and implemented a 1 fish bag limit and a 28"to less than 35" slot limit for ocean fisheries and a 1 fish bag limit and an 18" minimum size limit in Chesapeake Bay to reduce total recreational removals by 18% in both regions. The Addendum's measures were designed to apply the needed reductions proportionally to both the commercial and recreational sectors, although states were permitted to submit alternative regulations through conservation equivalency that achieve an 18% reduction in total removals statewide. The Board reviewed and approved management options for 2020 on a state-by-state basis in February, and all states promulgated regulations by April 1.

Addendum VI also required the mandatory use of circle hooks when fishing with bait to reduce release mortality in recreational striped bass fisheries. States are encouraged to promote the use of circle hooks through various public outreach and education platforms to garner support and compliance with this important conservation measure. In October 2020, the Board approved state implementation plans for circle hook requirements, with the caveat that no exemptions to Addendum VI mandatory circle hook requirements will be permitted. Circle hook regulations were required to be implemented no later than January 1, 2021. In March 2021, the Board approved a clarification on the definition of bait and methods of fishing[5] that require circle hooks, which must be implemented by states as part of Addendum VI compliance. Per Commission standards, states could implement more restrictive measures. The Board also approved guidance on how to address incidental catch of striped bass when targeting other species with non-circle hooks with bait attached. This guidance was not a compliance criterion since incidental catch was not originally part of Addendum VI.

Amendment 7

Amendment 7 was approved in May 2022, and consolidates Amendment 6 and its associated addenda into a single document. The purpose of Amendment 7 is to update the management program to align with current fishery needs and priorities given the status and understanding of the resource and fishery has changed considerably since implementation of Amendment 6 in 2003. Amendment 7 builds upon the Addendum VI to Amendment 6 action to address overfishing and initiate rebuilding in response to the overfished finding from the 2018 stock assessment, requiring the Board to rebuild the stock by 2029. Amendment 7 established new requirements for the following components of the FMP: management triggers, conservation equivalency, additional measures to address recreational release mortality, and the stock rebuilding plan.

For management triggers, Amendment 7 established an updated recruitment management trigger that is more sensitive to low recruitment than the previous trigger, and it required a specific management response to low year-class strength. The response requires re-evaluation of the fishing mortality management triggers to account for low recruitment. If one of those triggers trips after reevaluation, the Board is required to take action to reduce fishing mortality. Amendment 7 also updated the spawning stock biomass triggers by establishing a deadline for implementing a rebuilding plan. The

[5] Definition of Bait and Methods of Fishing: Circle hooks are required when fishing for striped bass with bait, which is defined as any marine or aquatic organism live or dead, whole or parts thereof. This shall not apply to any artificial lure with bait attached.

Board must implement a rebuilding plan within two years of when a spawning stock biomass trigger is tripped.

For conservation equivalency (CE), Amendment 7 does not allow CE to be used for most recreational striped bass fisheries when the stock is overfished. Amendment 7 also provided constraints around the use of Marine Recreational Information Program data for CE proposals and defines the overall percent reduction/liberalization a proposal must achieve, including required uncertainty buffers. These restrictions are intended to minimize the risks due to uncertainty when CE is used for non-quota managed striped bass fisheries.

For recreational release mortality, Amendment 7 established a new gear restriction which prohibits gaffing striped bass when fishing recreationally. This is in addition to the existing circle hook requirement when fishing recreationally with bait. Additionally, Amendment 7 required striped bass caught on any unapproved method of take (e.g., caught on a J-hook with bait) must be returned to the water immediately without unnecessary injury. This provision, which is related to incidental catch, was previously a recommendation in Addendum VI to Amendment 6.

For stock rebuilding, Amendment 7 addressed the 2022 stock assessment and how it would inform efforts to meet the 2029 stock rebuilding deadline. Given concerns about recent low recruitment and the possibility of continued low recruitment, Amendment 7 required the 2022 stock assessment's rebuilding projections to use a low recruitment assumption to conservatively account for that future possibility. Amendment 7 also established a mechanism for the Board to respond more quickly to the 2022 assessment results if action was needed to achieve stock rebuilding by 2029.

All provisions of Amendment 7 were effective May 5, 2022 except for gear restrictions. States had to implement new gear restrictions by January 1, 2023. Amendment 7 also maintained the same recreational and commercial measures specified in Addendum VI to Amendment 6, which were implemented in 2020. As such, all approved Addendum VI conservation equivalency programs and state implementation plans are maintained until such measures are changed in the future.

<u>Addendum I to Amendment 7</u>
Addendum I to Amendment 7 was approved in May 2023 to allow for voluntary ocean commercial quota transfers contingent on stock status. The addendum was developed to provide some, more immediate relief to states seeking a change to their commercial quota after the Board decided that changes to the commercial quota system would not be considered in the then ongoing development of Draft Amendment 7. When the stock is overfished, no quota transfers will be allowed. When the stock is not overfished, the Board can decide every one to two years whether it will allow voluntary transfers of ocean commercial quota. The Board can also set criteria for allowable transfers, including a limit on how much and when quota can be transferred in a given year, and the eligibility of a state to request a transfer based on its landings.

<u>2023 Emergency Action</u>
In May 2023, the Board approved an emergency action to change the recreational size limit, effective initially for 180 days from May 2, 2023 through October 28, 2023. This action responds to the extreme

magnitude of 2022 recreational harvest, which was nearly double that of 2021, and new stock rebuilding projections, which estimate the probability of the spawning stock rebuilding to its biomass target by 2029 drops from 97% under the lower 2021 fishing mortality rate to less than 15% if the higher 2022 fishing mortality rate continues each year.

The Board implemented the emergency 31-inch maximum size limit to reduce harvest of the strong 2015 year-class. The 31-inch maximum size limit applies to all existing recreational fishery regulations where a higher (or no) maximum size applies, excluding the May Chesapeake Bay trophy fisheries which already prohibit harvest of fish less than 35 inches. All bag limits, seasons, and gear restrictions will remain the same. As of July 2, 2023, all jurisdictions implemented regulations consistent with the required 31-inch maximum size limit.

In August 2023, the Board extended the emergency action through October 28, 2024 or until the implementation of Addendum II to Amendment 7 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan, whichever comes first. The extension of the emergency action provided the Board time to develop and finalize Addendum II, which was approved in January 2024 with an implementation date of May 1, 2024. Therefore, Addendum II replaced the emergency action upon its implementation by the states by May 1, 2024.

<u>Addendum II to Amendment 7</u>
Addendum II to Amendment 7 was approved in January 2024 to reduce fishing mortality in 2024 and support stock rebuilding. For the ocean recreational fishery, the Addendum implements a 28” to 31” slot limit, 1-fish bag limit, and maintains 2022 season dates for all fishery participants; this maintains the same ocean recreational measures adopted under the 2023 emergency action. For the Chesapeake Bay recreational fishery, the Addendum implements a 19” to 24” slot limit, 1-fish bag limit, and maintains 2022 season dates for all fishery participants. For the commercial fishery, the Addendum reduces commercial quotas by 7% in both the ocean and Chesapeake Bay.

To address concerns about recreational filleting allowances and compliance with recreational size limits, the Addendum establishes two requirements for states that authorize filleting of striped bass: racks must be retained and possession limited to no more than two fillets per legal fish. Finally, to enable an expedited response process to upcoming stock assessments, the Addendum establishes a mechanism allowing the Board to respond to a stock assessment via Board action if the stock is not projected to rebuild by 2029 with a probability greater than or equal to 50%. All Addendum II measures were required to be implemented by the states no later than May 1, 2024.

II. Status of the Stocks

The biological reference points (BRPs) currently used for management are based on the 1995 estimate of female spawning stock biomass (SSB). The 1995 estimate of female SSB is used as the SSB threshold because many stock characteristics (such as an expanded age structure) were reached by this year and the stock was declared recovered. The SSB target is equal to 125% of SSB threshold.

The accepted model is a forward projecting statistical catch-at-age (SCA) model which uses catch-at-age data and fishery-dependent and -independent survey indices to estimate annual population size, fishing mortality, and recruitment (NEFSC 2019). Indices of abundance track relative changes in the population over time while catch data provide information on the scale of the population size. Age structure data (numbers of fish by age) provide additional information on recruitment (number of age-1 fish entering the population) and trends in mortality.

In November 2024, the Board reviewed the results of the 2024 Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update, which uses the same peer-reviewed SCA model from the last benchmark assessment. The 2024 assessment indicated the resource is still overfished but not experiencing overfishing relative to the updated reference points. Female SSB in the terminal year (2023) was estimated at 191 million pounds, which is below the SSB threshold of 197 million pounds and below the SSB target of 247 million pounds (Figure 1). F in 2023 was estimated at 0.18, which is below the F threshold of 0.21 and above the F target of 0.17 (Figure 2). The updated fishing mortality reference points take into account the period of low recruitment the stock has experienced in recent years.

The assessment also indicated a period of strong recruitment (numbers of age-1 fish entering the population) from 1994-2004, followed by a period of lower recruitment from 2005-2011 (although not as low as the early 1980s, which likely contributed to the decline in SSB in recent years) (Figure 1). Recruitment of age-1 fish was above-average in 2012, 2015, 2016, and 2019 (corresponding to strong 2011, 2014, 2015, and 2018 year-classes), but estimates of age-1 striped bass were below the long-term average for 7 of the last 10 years. Recruitment in 2023 was estimated at 95 million age-1 fish, below the time series average of 137 million fish.

Stock projections were updated in 2025 for use in Draft Addendum III. The updated stock projections estimate 2024 fishing mortality based on final 2024 recreational catch estimates from MRIP and initial 2024 commercial harvest estimates from the states.

The Technical Committee (TC) reviewed assumptions about fishing mortality levels from 2025 through 2029 for the projections. Under status quo management, 2025 fishing mortality is predicted to increase as the above average 2018 year-class enters the current recreational Ocean slot limit, followed by a predicted decrease in fishing mortality in 2026 as the 2018 year-class starts to grow out of that Ocean slot limit with a lack of strong year-classes following. For the 2025 increase, the TC determined the best assumption is a 17% increase from the 2024 level based on the observed 17% increase from 2021 to 2023 when part of the 2015 year-class was still in the newly reduced Ocean slot limit. The TC noted the magnitude of increase may be overestimated since the 2018 year-class is not as strong as the 2015 year-class was. For 2026 through 2029, the TC determined the best assumption is a decrease back to the 2024 fishing mortality level in 2026 and maintain that level through 2029. This is a reasonable assumption under the same narrow slot limit with an above-average year-class growing out of the slot.

With the estimate of 2024 fishing mortality, the above assumptions about 2025-2029 fishing mortality under status quo management, and the same low recruitment assumption as the assessment, the projections estimate a 30% probability of being at or above the SSB target in 2029. The TC continues to

highlight several major sources of uncertainty in the projections and the difficulty of predicting future fishing mortality rates.

The next stock assessment for striped bass is a benchmark stock assessment—in which the assessment input data and methods are fully re-evaluated—scheduled for peer review in Spring 2027. The 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment will include data through 2025.

III. Status of the Fishery in the Ocean and Chesapeake Bay

Total Removals

In 2024, total Atlantic striped bass removals (including commercial harvest, commercial dead discards, recreational harvest, and recreational release mortality) were estimated at 4.1 million fish, which is a 27% decrease from 2023 total removals and 40% decrease from the recent peak removals in 2022 (Table 3; Figure 5). This 2024 decrease was primarily driven by a decrease in recreational removals, with commercial removals at a similar level as in 2023. In 2024, the commercial sector accounted for about 15% of total removals in numbers of fish (15% harvest and <1% dead discards), and the recreational sector accounted for about 85% of removals in numbers of fish (42% harvest and 42% release mortality) (Table 4, Figure 5).

Commercial Fishery

The commercial fishery (ocean and Chesapeake Bay) harvested an estimated 4.3 million pounds (about 604,000 fish) in 2024, which is about the same level of harvest as 2023 (approximately 2% increase by weight and <1% increase in number of fish) (Table 6, Table 7, Figure 7).

Since 1990, commercial landings from the Ocean fishery have accounted for an average 40% of total coastwide commercial landings by weight, with the other 60% coming from Chesapeake Bay. The proportion of commercial harvest coming from Chesapeake Bay is much higher in numbers of fish (roughly 80%) because fish harvested in Chesapeake Bay have a lower average weight than fish harvested in Ocean fisheries.

Of total commercial harvest (combined Ocean and Chesapeake Bay) by weight in 2024, Maryland landed 33%, Virginia landed 22%, Massachusetts landed 15%, and New York landed 14% (Figure 6). Additional harvest came from the Potomac River (10%), Delaware (3%), and Rhode Island (confidential).

In 2024, the Ocean commercial striped bass quota was 2.2 million pounds with 1.7 million pounds harvested in the Ocean region. In Chesapeake Bay region, the 2024 commercial striped bass quota was 2.8 million pounds, and 2.6 million pounds were harvested (Table 14).

The Ocean region regularly underutilizes its cumulative commercial quota due to the lack of striped bass availability in some state waters (particularly North Carolina, which holds 13% of the Ocean quota, yet has had zero Ocean harvest since 2013) coupled with prohibitions on commercial striped bass fishing in Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and New Jersey (which collectively share about 10% of the Ocean commercial quota). The Ocean commercial quota utilization was 76% in 2024, which was

about the same as Ocean quota utilization in 2021-2023. In the Ocean, most states that allow commercial harvest utilized >96% of their Ocean quota in 2024 with the exception of North Carolina which had zero Ocean harvest.

In Chesapeake Bay, quota utilization in 2024 was about 94%, which was an increase from 2021-2023 quota utilization of 84%.

Quota utilization is important to consider when calculating reductions in commercial removals. The projections for Addendum II's 2024 measures assumed the same quota utilization rate as 2022 (i.e., a 7% quota reduction in 2024 would result in a 7% reduction in harvest). While ocean quota utilization was about the same in 2024 as it was in 2022, Chesapeake Bay quota utilization increased in 2024 as compared to 2022. As quota utilization changes from year to year, the realized reduction in commercial removals will change.

The PRT notes there are several factors that contribute to changes in commercial harvest levels from year-to-year aside from changes to the quota level. Year-class availability could be a factor, particularly in the ocean, with the relatively strong 2015 year-class becoming less available to ocean fisheries in 2024 after the relatively high availability in 2022-2023. If stock abundance is increasing overall, that could also contribute to more fish being available. Availability also depends on when and how long striped bass stay within state waters (vs. offshore in the EEZ) during the season.

Looking across several years, commercial landings have generally decreased as quota has decreased, with the exception of 2024. From 2004-2014, coastwide commercial landings averaged 6.8 million pounds per year. From 2015-2019, commercial landings decreased to an average of 4.7 million pounds due to implementation of reduced quotas through Addendum IV. From 2020-2023, coastwide commercial landings decreased again to an average 4.1 million pounds due to further reduced quotas through Addendum VI to Amendment 6 and Amendment 7. In 2024, commercial landings were 4.3 million pounds, a slight increase despite the Addendum II quota reduction.

Recreational Fishery

Total Recreational Removals

Total recreational removals (harvest and release mortality) coastwide were estimated at 3.4 million fish in 2024, which is a 31% decrease from recreational removals in 2023 (Table 8). This coastwide decrease in total recreational removals was a combination of a decrease in both harvest and live releases (Figure 8). Combined private vessel/shore modes accounted for 97% of Ocean recreational striped bass removals in 2024, while for-hire components (charter and head boats) accounted for about 3% of Ocean removals. In Chesapeake Bay, private vessels/shore modes accounted for 77% of Bay recreational removals in 2024, while for-hire modes accounted for 23%.

Live Releases

The vast majority of recreational striped bass catch (over 90%) is released alive either due to angler preference or regulation (i.e., closed season, undersized, oversized, or already caught the bag limit) (Figure 9). The stock assessment assumes, based on previous studies, that 9% of fish that are released alive die as a result of being caught. In 2024, recreational anglers caught and released an estimated

19.1 million fish, of which 1.7 million are assumed to have died. This represents a 26% decrease in live releases coastwide from the 2023 level. By region in 2024, a reduction in live releases was observed in both the Ocean and Chesapeake Bay, 26% and 29%, respectively.

Recreational Harvest

Recreational harvest in 2024 decreased to 1.7 million fish (15.3 million pounds) from the 2023 level of 2.6 million fish (23.9 million pounds), which is a 34% decrease by number (Figure 8, Table 9, Table 10). Relative to 2022 when recreational harvest spiked, 2024 harvest is 50% lower. By region, both the Ocean and Chesapeake Bay saw a decrease in recreational harvest in 2024 relative to 2023, with the Bay seeing a larger reduction of 54% and the Ocean seeing a 28% reduction. The larger reduction in recreational harvest in Chesapeake Bay could be attributed, at least partly, to the implementation of a Bay-wide 19”-24” slot limit in 2024 under Addendum II, and to the lack of strong year-classes available in the Bay in 2024. In the Ocean, the size limit did not change between 2023 and 2024, but most of the remaining fish from the strong 2015 year-class (age-9 in 2024) had likely grown out of the narrow 28”-31” Ocean slot limit by 2024, potentially contributing to the decrease. However, it is important to note that changes in effort can also impact harvest.

In 2024, New Jersey landed the largest proportion of recreational harvest in number of fish (36%), followed by New York (25%), Massachusetts (15%), and Maryland (13%). The proportion of coastwide recreational harvest in numbers from Chesapeake Bay has been the lowest since the stock recovered in the 1990s (20% in 2022, 22% in 2023, and 16% in 2024). This decrease in the proportion of recreational harvest from Chesapeake Bay in recent years, and therefore increased proportion of Ocean recreational harvest, aligns with the availability of the strong 2015 year-class in the Ocean fishery in 2022-2023, implementation of a Chesapeake Bay-wide slot limit in 2024, and a decrease in Maryland’s for-hire bag limit from 2-fish to 1-fish in 2024. Additionally, as the last above average year-class (2018) move out of Chesapeake Bay after 2023, there are no strong year-classes following.

For recreational harvest by mode, the magnitude of change from 2023 to 2024 differs between the for-hire modes and the private-shore modes by region (Table 11). Private-shore harvest in 2024 decreased by 29% in the Ocean and 60% in Chesapeake Bay. For-hire harvest in the Ocean remained about the same as in 2023, while for-hire harvest in Chesapeake Bay decreased by 40% in 2024. The Ocean saw larger decreases in these modes from 2022-2023, when recreational harvest decreased by 50% in the for-hire modes and 25% for the private-shore modes.

Recreational Effort

Similar to the change in recreational harvest, the number of trips directed at striped bass (primary and secondary target) also shows a larger reduction in the Bay as compared to the Ocean (Table 12). In 2024, the number of striped bass directed trips in Chesapeake Bay region decreased by about 40% relative to 2023, while the number of striped bass directed trips in the Ocean decreased by about 10%. Overall, the total number of coastwide striped bass directed trips in 2024 decreased by 14% from 2023 and is the lowest number of directed trips in the past decade.

For directed trips by mode, private-shore directed trips in 2024 decreased by about 10% in the Ocean and decreased by 42% in Chesapeake Bay (Table 13). For-hire directed trips in the Ocean in 2024 decreased by about 16%, while for-hire directed trips in Chesapeake Bay decreased by 13%.

Factors Contributing to Catch and Effort Trends

Overall, there are several factors that contribute to trends in recreational catch and effort, including management measures, year-class availability, overall stock abundance, nearshore availability of bait and striped bass, and angler behavior. The relatively strong 2015 year-class moving into the Ocean and becoming available to the Ocean slot (i.e., surpassing 28-inches), was likely the primary driver of increased Ocean recreational catch in 2022. The subsequent emergency action in 2023 intended to reduce harvest of the 2015 year-class likely contributed to the harvest reduction observed in 2023. The 2015 year-class grew out of the Ocean slot by 2024 (i.e., surpassing 31-inches) likely contributing to the decreases in Ocean recreational harvest in 2024. In Chesapeake Bay, a combination of the five-inch recreational slot limit implemented in 2024 and the lack of strong year-classes available after the 2018 year-class moved into the Ocean likely played a role. Angler effort and behavior are also important to consider. When more fish are available in the fishery, effort can often increase in response. When narrower size limits are in place or less fish are available in the fishery, anglers may change their behavior and level of effort.

IV. Albemarle Sound and Roanoke River Management Area

While striped bass in North Carolina's ocean waters are managed under the Interstate FMP, the Interstate FMP formally defers management of the Albemarle Sound-Roanoke River (A-R) stock to the state of North Carolina using A-R stock-specific BRPs approved by the Board (NCDMF 2013, 2014). North Carolina is required to inform the Commission of changes to striped bass management in the A-R System.

Status of the Albemarle Sound-Roanoke River Striped Bass Stock

The most recent A-R stock assessment, the 2022 Stock Assessment Update, uses a forward-projecting fully-integrated, age-structured statistical model estimating population parameters and reference points for the A-R striped bass stock for 1991-2021 (Lee et al. 2022). The 2022 stock assessment is an update of the 2020 Benchmark Stock Assessment (Lee et al. 2020). The 2020 benchmark stock assessment model was peer reviewed by an outside panel of experts and approved for management use by the Board in May 2021. The 2022 assessment update was also peer reviewed in January 2023.

The A-R stock is managed using reference points for female spawning stock biomass (SSB) and fishing mortality (*F*) with threshold values based on 35% spawning potential ratio and target values based on 45% spawning potential ratio. The 2022 assessment estimated female SSB in 2021 (terminal year) was 16.1 metric tons, which is below the SSB threshold of 125 metric tons. The assessment estimated *F* in 2021 was 0.77, which is above the *F* threshold of 0.22. These results indicate the stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring (Figure 3, Figure 4). Abundance indices indicate continued stock decline, and juvenile recruitment, in particular, has been very low for several consecutive years.

	Target	*Threshold*	*Terminal Year (2021) Estimate*
Female SSB	164 metric tons	125 metric tons	16 metric tons
Fishing Mortality (F)	0.14	0.20	0.77

NC Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan

Estuarine striped bass in North Carolina are currently managed under Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and its subsequent revision and recent supplement (NCDMF 2022, 2024). The plan is jointly developed between the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission (NCMFC) and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC). Amendment 2, adopted in 2022, lays out separate management strategies for the A-R stock and the estuarine (non-migratory) Central and Southern striped bass stocks in the Tar-Pamlico, Neuse, and Cape Fear rivers. Management programs in Amendment 2 for the A-R stock utilize annual total allowable landings (TAL), daily possession limits, open and closed harvest seasons, gill net mesh size and yardage restrictions, seasonal small mesh gill net attendance requirements, single barbless hook requirements in some areas, minimum size limits, and a no-harvest slot limit in the Roanoke River to maintain a sustainable harvest and reduce regulatory discard mortality in all sectors.

Based on the results of the 2022 stock assessment, the resulting total allowable landings (TAL) level needed to reduce fishing mortality to its target is effectively too low to manage. For this reason and due to continued concern about stock decline and low recruitment, North Carolina implemented a harvest moratorium in the Albemarle Sound and Roanoke River Management Areas (ASMA and RRMA) effective January 2024 via the adaptive management framework under Amendment 2 of the NC Estuarine Striped Bass FMP (NCDMF 2024). In addition, the 2023 fall recreational and commercial seasons in the Albemarle Sound did not open because there is little quota remaining and because of stock status concerns.

V. Status of Research and Monitoring

Amendment 7 (approved May 2022) and its addenda, as well as the 2023 emergency action effective through April 2024, set the regulatory and monitoring measures for the coastwide striped bass fishery for 2024. Amendment 7 requires certain states to implement fishery-dependent monitoring programs for striped bass. All states with commercial fisheries or substantial recreational fisheries are required to define the catch and effort composition of these fisheries. Additionally, all states with a commercial fishery must implement a commercial harvest tagging program.

Amendment 7 also requires certain states to monitor the striped bass population independent of the fisheries. Juvenile abundance surveys are required from Maine (Kennebec River), New York (Hudson River), New Jersey (Delaware River), Maryland (Chesapeake Bay tributaries), Virginia (Chesapeake Bay tributaries), and North Carolina (Albemarle Sound). Spawning stock sampling is mandatory for New York (Hudson River), Pennsylvania (Delaware River), Delaware (Delaware River), Maryland (Upper Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River), Virginia (Rappahannock River and James River), and North Carolina (Albemarle Sound-Roanoke River). NOAA Fisheries, USFWS, Massachusetts, New York, New

Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina are also required to continue their tagging programs, which provide data used to determine survivorship and migration patterns.

VI. Status of Management Measures and Issues

Ocean Commercial Quota

In 2024, the ocean cumulative commercial quota was 2.2 million pounds (sum of all state quotas). New York and Maryland Ocean exceeded their state quotas in 2024 by about 3% and 7%, respectively. Table 14 outlines 2024 quotas and harvest.

Chesapeake Bay Commercial Quota

In 2024, the Chesapeake Bay-wide quota was 2.8 million pounds and was allocated to Maryland, the PRFC, and Virginia based on historical harvest per their mutual agreement. In 2024, the Bay-wide quota was not exceeded but Maryland exceeded their portion of the Bay quota by less than 1%. Table 14 outlines 2024 quotas and harvest.

Conservation Equivalency Programs

There is one approved conservation equivalency (CE) program under Addendum II: the New Jersey Striped Bass Bonus Program (SBBP). New Jersey's approved CE plan allows the state to allocate its commercial quota to its recreational bonus program that has been in place since 1990. The SBBP currently allows participants to harvest 1 fish at 24" to less than 28" per permit. NJ calculates the total number of issuable permit/tags by converting the quota to number of fish based on mean weight; in addition, as an added conservation measure, NJ will apply a buffer by using the rounded-up mean weight of the largest fish possible under the slot. This results in a lower maximum than using the average weight alone.

In 2024, a total of 24,717 SBBP permits were issued and 8,010 were used, which is an 18% decrease from 2023. The percent used (32%) is similar to the percent used in 2023 of 37%. Usage in 2023-2024 increased compared to 26-28% of permits used in 2021-2022. New Jersey noted the increase in number of permits issued and percent of total permits used in 2023 and 2024 is likely due to the availability of the above-average 2018 year-class to the SBBP fishery (targeting smaller fish than the ocean fishery) and the opportunity to harvest a bonus fish given the narrow slot limit restriction in the ocean recreational fishery since 2023. Another factor contributing to increased participation in recent years was the COVID-19 pandemic, which transitioned the SBBP application process online leading to higher participation since then. However, although the number of SBBP permits used (i.e., number of SBBP fish harvested) has increased in recent years, the number of permits used is still less than half of the maximum number of permits allowed to be used per New Jersey's quota allocation.

Chesapeake Bay Spring Harvest of Migrant Striped Bass

Historically, recreational fishermen in Chesapeake Bay are permitted to take adult migrant fish during a limited seasonal fishery, commonly referred to as the Spring Trophy Fishery. From 1993 to 2007 the fishery operated under a quota. Beginning in 2008, the Board approved non-quota management until stock assessment indicates that corrective action is necessary to reduce *F* on the coastal stock. Through 2023, the Spring Trophy Fishery was managed via bag limits and minimum sizes in Maryland and the

Potomac River. The Commonwealth of Virginia closed the spring trophy season beginning in 2019, and Maryland and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission closed the spring trophy season beginning in 2024.

Due to the 2024 season closure, the 2024 estimate of migrant fish harvested during the Maryland trophy season from May 1-May 15 was 0 fish.

For the entire time period of May 1 through June 15, 2024 when migrant fish were available to the Chesapeake Bay fisheries, a total of 146 migrant fish were harvested in Maryland (50 fish by charter vessels; 96 fish by private vessels), which is an 85% decrease compared to 2023 and well below the 2006-2024 average of 29,652.

In the 2024 Migrant Striped Bass Harvest Report, Maryland noted that if the current trophy season closure and 24-inch maximum size limit regulations remain in future years, the harvest of migrant striped bass will remain at biologically insignificantly low levels.

Wave-1 Recreational Harvest Estimates

Evidence suggests that North Carolina, Virginia, and possibly other states have had sizeable wave-1 (January/February) recreational striped bass fisheries beginning in 1996 (NEFSC 2018b). MRIP, formerly the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS), has sampled for striped bass in North Carolina during wave-1 since 2004 (other states are not currently covered during wave-1). Virginia harvest in wave-1 is estimated for stock assessment via the ratio of landings and tag returns in wave-6 and regression analysis (refer to the methods described in NEFSC 2018a for more detail).

However, based on fishery-independent data collected by NCDMF, ASMFC and USFWS, striped bass distributions on their overwintering grounds during December through February have changed significantly since the mid-2000s. The migratory portion of the stock has been well offshore and shifted north in the EEZ (>3 miles) affecting both Virginia's and North Carolina's striped bass winter ocean fisheries in recent years. Furthermore, North Carolina has reported zero recreational striped bass harvest during wave 1 and wave 6 in the ocean for 2012-2024, and Virginia has reported zero recreational ocean harvest for nine of the last ten years (note MRIP sampling does not occur in Virginia during wave 1). Similarly, North Carolina's commercial fishery has reported zero striped bass landings from the ocean since 2013.

Amendment 7 Commercial Fish Tagging Program

Section 3.1.1 of Amendment 7 includes compliance requirements for monitoring commercial fishery harvest tagging programs, which have been required through the FMP since 2013. In 2024, all states implemented commercial tagging programs consistent with the tagging program requirements. Table 15 describes commercial tagging programs by state.

The PRT continues to emphasize the importance of tag accounting to account for unused tags at the end of each fishing year in all states. Due to the early deadlines for commercial tagging reports (60 days before the commercial fishery opens), tag accounting for the previous year is often preliminary or not yet available at that time. To address this, the PRT reiterates the importance of states reporting all

tag accounting results in their annual state compliance reports (i.e., tags issued, tags used, tags returned, tags missing/broken/reported lost, tags not accounted for).

The PRT and state commercial tagging contacts met in July 2025 to conduct a ten-year review of the commercial tagging program as previously recommended by the PRT and as tasked by the Board in August 2024.

Addendum II Recreational Filleting Requirements

Addendum II established two requirements for states that authorize filleting of striped bass: racks must be retained and possession limited to no more than two fillets per legal fish. All states except PRFC have implemented regulations per the approved Addendum II state implementation plans. The PRT notes that the approved implementation plans included approval of states with existing language that does not explicitly specify two fillets per fish. During Board discussion in March 2024, it was noted that current rules requiring racks to be maintained and that the racks must be measurable preclude anyone from landing more than two fillets per fish.

Juvenile Abundance Index Analysis

The following states are required to conduct striped bass young-of-year juvenile abundance index (JAI) surveys on an annual basis: Maine for the Kennebec River; New York for the Hudson River; New Jersey for the Delaware River; Maryland for the Maryland Chesapeake Bay tributaries; Virginia for the Virginia Chesapeake Bay tributaries; and North Carolina for the A-R stock.

The PRT and the Striped Bass Technical Committee (TC) annually review the JAIs per the recruitment trigger specified in the FMP. As of May 2022, the new Amendment 7 recruitment trigger is effective and reads as follows:

> If any of the four JAIs used in the stock assessment model to estimate recruitment (NY, NJ, MD, VA) shows an index value that is below 75% of all values (i.e., below the 25th percentile) in the respective JAI from 1992-2006* (which represents a period of high recruitment) for three consecutive years, then an interim F target and interim F threshold calculated using the low recruitment assumption will be implemented, and the F-based management triggers will be reevaluated using those interim reference points. If an F-based trigger is tripped upon reevaluation, the striped bass management program must be adjusted to reduce F to the interim F target within one year.

The 2025 review of JAIs evaluates the 2022, 2023, and 2024 JAI values per the Amendment 7 recruitment trigger. Three states (New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia) met the criteria of the Amendment 7 recruitment trigger (Figure 10). New Jersey's (Delaware River) JAI values for 2022 (0.77), 2023 (0.26), and 2024 (0.53) were below its trigger level of 1.07. Maryland's JAI values for 2022 (1.78) 2023 (0.57), and 2024 (1.06) were below the Maryland JAI trigger level of 4.16. Virginia's JAI values in 2022 (7.95), 2023 (4.26), and 2024 (3.43) were below its trigger level of 8.22. These states trip the recruitment trigger, requiring F reference points using the low recruitment assumption to be calculated, which was already done for the 2024 stock assessment update and current reference points. The reference points from the 2022 stock assessment update also used the low recruitment assumption.

While New York's JAI (Hudson River) was above its trigger level of 11.70 in 2022 (21.68), the JAI dropped to 4.04 in 2023 and 7.85 in 2024. 2023 was the lowest value in the time series since 1985.

Maine's JAI (Kennebec River) and North Carolina's JAI (Albemarle-Roanoke) are not part of the recruitment trigger, but are still required monitoring for those states (Figure 11). Maine's JAI has been below its recruitment failure since 2019, and North Carolina's JAI was below its recruitment failure level from 2018-2023 but increased in 2024. In 2024, North Carolina stocked 2.4 million striped bass at the fry stage, and 427,176 striped bass at the Phase-I stage into the western Albemarle Sound nursery area. All fish are marked in the hatchery using Parentage Based Tagging (PBT) techniques that allows for future genetic analysis of fin clips to determine the percentage of wild versus hatchery reared fish collected during the 2024 sampling season. When genetic analysis of fin clips collected in 2024 is complete, North Carolina will update the 2024 JAI to determine the JAI of hatchery fish and the JAI of wild fish.

Law Enforcement Reporting

States are asked to report any law enforcement issues that occurred the previous season in annual compliance reports. The most common issue noted in state compliance reports is striped bass above or below the slot limit.

VII. Plan Review Team Comments and Recommendations

A summary of 2024 fishery regulations by state is provided in Table 1 and Table 2. Each state's commercial tag monitoring program is described in Table 15 and state compliance with fishery-independent and fishery-dependent monitoring requirements are summarized in Table 16.

Based on annual state compliance reports (ASMFC 2025), the PRT determined that all states in 2024 implemented a management and monitoring program consistent with the provisions of the FMP except for the following inconsistencies:

- PRFC has not yet implemented the Addendum II requirements for recreational filleting. PRFC noted that due to an error in its regulations, the PRFC does not have any regulatory language that authorizes or prohibits filleting striped bass at-sea/shore-side at the current time. The PRFC is in the process of amending the existing language at their upcoming September 2025 Commission meeting with the intention of prohibiting any at-sea/shore-side filleting for recreationally caught striped bass. If passed, the language would become effective September 22, 2025.
- New York and Maryland are addressing their 2024 quota overages with most of the quota payback in 2025 based on preliminary harvest estimates available when planning for the 2025 commercial fishery. The remaining small portion of the quota payback will be taken in 2026 based on final harvest estimates that were not available until after 2025 commercial tags had been distributed. Maryland's approved Addendum II implementation did note this process of using the preliminary estimate for 2025 payback and using the final estimate for any remaining

payback in 2026. This approach for reconciling a quota overage over two calendar years was not in New York's approved Addendum II implementation plan.

The PRT developed the following **recommendations**:

- The PRT recommends the Board discuss the issue of determining quota overages based on preliminary harvest estimates. Per the FMP, quota overages must be paid back the following year, but final commercial harvest estimates may not be available to determine the full amount of a quota overage before planning for the next year's fishery, as with New York and Maryland for 2024 quota overages. The Board should discuss this process and consider whether states could try to account for any expected increase in final harvest estimates when determining the overage amount using preliminary estimates.

The PRT notes the following **additional comments**:

- Maryland has proposed to discontinue its annual Striped Bass Spring Migrant Harvest Report, which details harvest of trophy fish in the spring, since the Maryland trophy fishery is now closed and the Bay slot limit is designed to avoid larger fish. The spring migrant report has been accompanying the annual state compliance report since 2004 when the FMP at the time managed the spring trophy fishery using a quota that changed every year. It has been several years since the spring trophy fishery was managed under a specific quota.
- While the New York spawning stock monitoring program in the Hudson River does meet the FMP's fishery-independent monitoring requirements, it does not provide an index of relative abundance to characterize the Hudson River stock which was identified as a high priority research recommendation at SAW 66. This will be considered during the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment.

VIII. Research Recommendations

Research recommendations were developed by the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment Subcommittee and the 66th SARC and are listed in the final stock assessment report starting on report page 569 (NEFSC 2019).

IX. References

ASMFC. 2021. Review of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass (*Morone saxatilis*): 2020 Fishing Year.

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X. Tables

Table 1. Summary of 2024 Atlantic striped bass commercial measures under Addendum II to Amendment 7 as of May 1, 2024. Please refer to each state's regulations for additional details. Source: 2025 State Compliance Reports. Minimum sizes and slot size limits are in total length (TL). *NJ commercial quota reallocated to recreational bonus fish program.

STATE	SIZE LIMITS (TL) and TRIP LIMITS	ADDENDUM II QUOTA	OPEN SEASON
ME	Commercial fishing prohibited		
NH	Commercial fishing prohibited		
MA	35" minimum size; no gaffing undersized fish. 15 fish/day with commercial boat permit; 2 fish/day with rod and reel permit.	683,773 lbs. Hook & Line only.	6.18-9.30 (or when quota reached); open fishing days of Tuesday and Wednesday, with Thursday added on August 1 if >30% quota remains. Cape Cod Canal closed to commercial striped bass fishing.
RI	Floating fish trap: 26" minimum size unlimited possession limit until 80% of quota reached, then 500 lbs. per licensee per day	Total: 138,467 lbs., split 39:61 between the trap and general category. Gill netting prohibited.	4.1 – 12.31
	General category (mostly rod & reel): 34" min. Five (5) fish per person per calendar day, or if fishing from a vessel, five (5) fish per vessel per calendar day.		6.11-6.20; 7.9-12.31, or until quota reached. Closed Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays throughout.
CT	Commercial fishing prohibited; bonus program in CT suspended indefinitely in 2020.		
NY	26"-38" size; (Hudson River closed to commercial harvest)	595,868 lbs. Pound Nets, Gill Nets (6-8"stretched mesh), Hook & Line.	5.15 – 12.15, or until quota reached. Limited entry permit only.
NJ	Commercial fishing prohibited; bonus program*: 1 fish/permit at 24" to <28"	200,798 lbs.*	5.15 – 12.31 (permit required)

STATE	SIZE LIMITS (TL) and TRIP LIMITS	ADDENDUM II QUOTA	OPEN SEASON
PA	Commercial fishing prohibited		
DE	Gill Net: 20” min in DE Bay/River during spring season. 28” in all other waters/seasons.	Gill net: 132,501 lbs. Split between gill net and hook and line. No fixed nets in DE River.	Gill net: 2.15-5.31 (2.15-3.30 for Nanticoke River) & 11.15-12.31; drift nets only 2.15-28 & 5.1-31; no trip limit.
	Hook and Line: 28” min		Hook and Line: 4.1–12.31, 200 lbs./day trip limit
MD	Chesapeake Bay and Rivers: 18–36” Common pool trip limits: Hook and Line - 250 lbs./license/week Gill Net - 300 lbs./license/week	1,344,216 lbs. (part of Bay-wide quota)	Bay Pound Net: 6.1-12.31 Bay Haul Seine: 1.1-2.28; 6.1-12.31 Bay Hook & Line: 6.1-12.31 Bay Drift Gill Net: 1.1-2.28, 12.1-12.31
	Ocean: 24” minimum	Ocean: 82,857 lbs.	1.1-5.31, 10.1-12.31
PRFC	18” min all year; 36” max 2.15–3.25	532,761 lbs. (split between gear types; part of Bay-wide quota)	Hook & Line: 1.1-3.25, 6.1-12.31 Pound Net & Other: 2.15-3.25, 6.1-12.15 Gill Net: 11.9.2021-3.25.2022 Misc. Gear: 2.15-3.25, 6.1-12.15
VA	Chesapeake Bay and Rivers: 18” min; 28” max size limit 3.15–6.15	914,555 lbs. (part of Bay-wide quota)	1.16-12.31
	Ocean: 28” min	116,282 lbs.	
NC	Ocean: 28” min	274,810 lbs. (split between gear types)	Seine fishery was not opened Gill net fishery was not opened Trawl fishery was not opened

Table 2. Summary of 2024 Atlantic striped bass recreational size limits, bag limits, and seasons under Addendum II to Amendment 7 as of May 1, 2024. Please refer to each state's regulations for gear/fishing restrictions in that state. Source: 2025 Compliance Reports. Minimum size and slot size limits are in total length (TL).

STATE	SIZE LIMITS (TL)/REGION	BAG LIMIT	OPEN SEASON
ME	28" to 31"	1 fish/day	All year, except spawning areas are closed 12.1-4.30 and C&R only 5.1-6.30
NH	28" to <31"	1 fish/day	All year
MA	28" to <31"	1 fish/day	All year
RI	28" to <31"	1 fish/day	All year
CT	28" to 31"	1 fish/day	All year
NY	Ocean and Delaware River: 28" to 31"	1 fish/day	Ocean: 4.15-12.15 Delaware River: All year
	Hudson River: 23" to 28"	1 fish/day	Hudson River: 4.1-11.30
NJ	28" to 31"	1 fish/day	Closed 1.1 – end of Feb in all waters except in the Atlantic Ocean, and closed 4.1-5.31 in the lower DE River and tribs
PA	Upstream from Calhoun St Bridge: 28" to <31", 1 fish/day		All year
	Downstream from Calhoun St Bridge: 28" to <31", 1 fish/day* *except from 4.1-5.31: 22" to <26", 1 fish/day		All year. 1 fish/day at 22" to <26" slot from 4.1-5.31

STATE	SIZE LIMITS (TL)/REGION	BAG LIMIT	OPEN SEASON
DE	28” to 31”	1 fish/day	All year. C&R only 4.1-5.31 in spawning grounds. 20” to 24” slot from 7.1-8.31 in DE River, Bay & tributaries
MD	Ocean: 28” to 31”	1 fish/day	All year
	Chesapeake Bay and tribs^	C&R only	1.1-2.28, 3.1-3.31, 12.11-12.31
	Chesapeake Bay and tribs^	No targeting	4.1-5.31, 7.16-7.31
	Chesapeake Bay: 19” to 24” 1 fish/day^		5.16-5.31
	Chesapeake Bay and tribs: 19” to 24”, 1 fish/day^		6.1-7.15, 8.1-12.10
PRFC	Summer/Fall: 19” to 24”		1 fish/day
DC	19” to 24”		1 fish/day
VA	Ocean: 28” to 31”		1 fish/day
	Bay Spring/Summer/Fall: 19” to 24”		1 fish/day
NC	Ocean: 28” to 31”		1 fish/day

^ MD Susquehanna Flats: C&R only 1.1-3.31 and 12.11-12.31; No targeting 4.1-5.31; 1 fish at 19”-24” slot 6.1-7.15 and 8.1-12.10; No targeting 7.16-7.31

Table 3. Total removals (harvest plus discards/release mortality) of Atlantic striped bass by sector in numbers of fish, 1998-2024 calendar years. Note: Harvest is from state compliance reports/MRIP (June 2025), discards/release mortality is from ASMFC. Estimates exclude inshore harvest from NC.

Year	Commercial		Recreational		Total Removals
	Harvest	Dead Discards*	Harvest	Release Mortality	
1998	1,215,219	359,876	2,915,390	3,259,133	7,749,618
1999	1,223,572	348,807	3,123,496	3,140,905	7,836,779
2000	1,216,812	213,504	3,802,477	3,044,203	8,276,995
2001	931,412	182,703	4,052,474	2,449,599	7,616,188
2002	928,085	198,124	4,005,084	2,792,200	7,923,493
2003	854,326	129,223	4,781,402	2,848,445	8,613,396
2004	879,768	154,995	4,553,027	3,665,234	9,253,023
2005	970,403	147,004	4,480,802	3,441,928	9,040,137
2006	1,047,648	159,914	4,883,961	4,812,332	10,903,855
2007	1,015,114	158,718	3,944,679	2,944,253	8,062,765
2008	1,027,824	105,275	4,381,186	2,391,200	7,905,484
2009	1,050,055	131,583	4,700,222	1,942,061	7,823,921
2010	1,031,448	133,375	5,388,440	1,760,759	8,314,022
2011	944,777	82,175	5,006,358	1,482,029	7,515,339
2012	870,684	199,927	4,046,299	1,847,880	6,964,790
2013	784,379	116,919	5,157,760	2,393,425	8,452,483
2014	750,263	114,049	4,033,746	2,172,342	7,070,400
2015	621,952	84,840	3,085,725	2,307,133	6,099,651
2016	609,028	92,260	3,500,434	2,981,430	7,183,151
2017	592,670	100,349	2,937,911	3,421,110	7,052,041
2018	615,649	100,491	2,244,765	2,826,667	5,787,571
2019	652,777	84,827	2,150,936	2,589,045	5,477,585
2020	581,832	60,363	1,709,973	2,760,231	5,112,399
2021	644,204	89,484	1,841,902	2,583,788	5,159,378
2022	622,335	44,624	3,454,021	2,667,846	6,788,826
2023	600,631	16,965	2,624,429	2,343,556	5,585,581
2024	604,170+	17,102	1,728,744	1,718,439	4,068,455

* Commercial discards for 2024 were estimated by applying the 2023 discard-to-landings ratios for each region. The entire time series for commercial dead discards will be re-estimated as part of the 2027 stock assessment.

+ Maryland and Virginia commercial landings for 2024 are considered preliminary.

Table 4 Proportion of total removals (harvest plus discards/release mortality) of Atlantic striped bass by sector in numbers of fish, 1998-2024. Note: Harvest is from state compliance reports/MRIP (June 2025), discards/release mortality is from ASMFC. Estimates exclude inshore harvest from NC.

Year	Commercial		Recreational	
	Harvest	Dead Discards*	Harvest	Release Mortality
1998	16%	5%	38%	42%
1999	16%	4%	40%	40%
2000	15%	3%	46%	37%
2001	12%	2%	53%	32%
2002	12%	3%	51%	35%
2003	10%	2%	56%	33%
2004	10%	2%	49%	40%
2005	11%	2%	50%	38%
2006	10%	1%	45%	44%
2007	13%	2%	49%	37%
2008	13%	1%	55%	30%
2009	13%	2%	60%	25%
2010	12%	2%	65%	21%
2011	13%	1%	67%	20%
2012	13%	3%	58%	27%
2013	9%	1%	61%	28%
2014	11%	2%	57%	31%
2015	10%	1%	51%	38%
2016	8%	1%	49%	42%
2017	8%	1%	42%	49%
2018	11%	2%	39%	49%
2019	12%	2%	39%	47%
2020	11%	1%	33%	54%
2021	12%	2%	36%	50%
2022	9%	1%	51%	39%
2023	11%	0.3%	47%	42%
2024	15%	0.4%	42%	42%

* Commercial discards for 2024 were estimated by applying the 2023 discard-to-landings ratios for each region. The entire time series for commercial dead discards will be re-estimated as part of the 2027 stock assessment.
Note: Percent may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 5. Total harvest of Atlantic striped bass by sector, 1998-2024 calendar years. Note: Harvest is from state compliance reports/MRIP (Query June 2024). Estimates exclude inshore harvest from NC.

Year	Numbers of Fish			Pounds		
	Commercial	Recreational	Total	Commercial	Recreational	Total
1998	1,215,219	2,915,390	4,130,609	6,551,623	29,603,199	36,154,822
1999	1,223,572	3,123,496	4,347,068	6,485,079	33,564,988	40,050,067
2000	1,216,812	3,802,477	5,019,289	6,715,044	34,050,817	40,765,861
2001	931,412	4,052,474	4,983,886	6,266,953	39,263,154	45,530,107
2002	928,085	4,005,084	4,933,169	6,152,583	41,840,025	47,992,608
2003	854,326	4,781,402	5,635,728	6,750,799	54,091,836	60,842,635
2004	879,768	4,553,027	5,432,795	7,340,822	53,031,074	60,371,896
2005	970,403	4,480,802	5,451,205	7,120,647	57,421,174	64,541,821
2006	1,047,648	4,883,961	5,931,609	6,780,541	50,674,431	57,454,972
2007	1,015,114	3,944,679	4,959,793	7,047,179	42,823,614	49,870,793
2008	1,027,824	4,381,186	5,409,010	7,190,800	56,665,318	63,856,118
2009	1,050,055	4,700,222	5,750,277	7,217,484	54,411,389	61,628,873
2010	1,031,448	5,388,440	6,419,888	6,996,713	61,431,360	68,428,073
2011	944,777	5,006,358	5,951,135	6,789,792	59,592,092	66,381,884
2012	870,684	4,046,299	4,916,983	6,516,761	53,256,619	59,773,380
2013	784,379	5,157,760	5,942,139	5,819,678	65,057,289	70,876,967
2014	750,263	4,033,746	4,784,009	5,937,949	47,948,610	53,886,559
2015	621,952	3,085,725	3,707,677	4,829,997	39,898,799	44,728,796
2016	609,028	3,500,434	4,109,462	4,848,772	43,671,532	48,520,304
2017	592,670	2,937,911	3,530,581	4,816,423	37,952,581	42,769,004
2018	615,649	2,244,765	2,860,414	4,795,679	23,069,028	27,864,707
2019	652,777	2,150,936	2,803,713	4,254,547	23,556,287	27,810,834
2020	581,832	1,709,973	2,291,805	3,607,681	14,858,984	18,466,665
2021	644,204	1,841,902	2,486,106	4,306,781	15,781,510	20,088,291
2022	622,335	3,454,021	4,076,356	4,323,762	35,800,246	40,124,008
2023	600,631	2,624,429	3,225,060	4,218,988	23,937,530	28,156,518
2024	604,170+	1,728,744	2,332,914	4,319,384+	15,322,884	19,642,268

+ Maryland and Virginia commercial landings for 2024 are considered preliminary.

Table 6. Commercial harvest by region in pounds (x1000), 1998-2024 calendar years. Source: State compliance reports. ^Estimates exclude inshore harvest from NC.

Year	Ocean								Chesapeake Bay				Grand Total
	MA	RI	NY	DE	MD	VA	NC^	Total	MD	PRFC	VA	Total	
1998	810.1	94.7	485.9	163.2	84.6	375.0	273.0	2,286.6	2,426.7	726.2	1,112.2	4,265.1	6,551.6
1999	766.2	119.7	491.8	187.1	62.6	614.8	391.5	2,633.7	2,274.8	653.3	923.4	3,851.4	6,485.1
2000	796.2	111.8	542.7	140.6	149.7	932.7	162.4	2,836.0	2,261.8	666.0	951.2	3,879.0	6,715.0
2001	815.4	129.7	633.1	198.8	113.9	782.4	381.1	3,054.3	1,660.9	658.7	893.1	3,212.6	6,267.0
2002	924.9	129.2	518.6	160.6	93.2	710.2	441.0	2,977.6	1,759.4	521.0	894.4	3,174.9	6,152.6
2003	1,055.5	190.2	753.3	191.5	103.9	166.4	201.2	2,662.1	1,721.8	676.6	1,690.4	4,088.7	6,750.8
2004	1,214.2	232.3	741.7	182.2	134.2	161.3	605.4	3,271.2	1,790.3	772.3	1,507.0	4,069.6	7,340.8
2005	1,102.2	215.6	689.8	173.1	46.9	185.2	604.5	3,017.4	2,008.7	533.6	1,561.0	4,103.3	7,120.6
2006	1,322.3	221.4	688.4	179.5	91.1	195.0	74.2	2,771.8	2,116.3	673.5	1,219.0	4,008.7	6,780.5
2007	1,039.3	240.6	731.5	188.7	96.3	162.3	379.5	2,838.1	2,240.6	599.3	1,369.2	4,209.1	7,047.2
2008	1,160.3	245.9	653.1	188.8	118.0	163.1	288.4	2,817.7	2,208.0	613.8	1,551.3	4,373.1	7,190.8
2009	1,134.3	234.8	789.9	192.4	127.3	140.4	190.0	2,809.1	2,267.3	727.8	1,413.3	4,408.4	7,217.5
2010	1,224.5	248.9	786.8	185.4	44.8	127.8	276.4	2,894.7	2,105.8	683.2	1,313.0	4,102.0	6,996.7
2011	1,163.9	228.2	855.3	188.6	21.4	158.8	246.4	2,862.5	1,955.1	694.2	1,278.1	3,927.3	6,789.8
2012	1,218.5	239.9	683.8	194.3	77.6	170.8	7.3	2,592.0	1,851.4	733.7	1,339.6	3,924.7	6,516.8
2013	1,004.5	231.3	823.8	191.4	93.5	182.4	0.0	2,526.9	1,662.2	623.8	1,006.8	3,292.8	5,819.7
2014	1,138.5	216.9	531.5	167.9	120.9	183.7	0.0	2,359.4	1,805.7	603.4	1,169.4	3,578.5	5,937.9
2015	866.0	188.3	516.3	144.1	34.6	138.1	0.0	1,887.5	1,436.9	538.0	967.6	2,942.5	4,830.0
2016	938.7	174.7	575.0	136.5	19.7	139.2	0.0	1,983.9	1,425.5	537.1	902.3	2,864.9	4,848.8
2017	823.4	175.3	701.2	141.8	80.5	133.9	0.0	2,056.1	1,439.8	492.7	827.8	2,760.3	4,816.4
2018	753.7	116.8	731.4	155.0	79.8	134.2	0.0	1,970.9	1,424.3	449.4	951.0	2,824.7	4,795.7
2019	586.1	144.2	327.3	132.6	82.8	138.0	0.0	1,410.9	1,475.2	417.3	951.1	2,843.6	4,254.5
2020	386.9	115.9	518.2	138.0	83.6	77.2	0.0	1,319.8	1,273.8	400.3	613.8	2,287.9	3,607.7
2021	732.1	130.3	600.9	140.3	88.7	119.9	0.0	1,812.1	1,351.5	411.3	731.9	2,494.7	4,306.8
2022	770.4	100.0	588.6	139.2	88.9	121.7	0.0	1,808.8	1,363.7	428.5	722.8	2,515.0	4,323.8
2023	677.3	80.6	616.6	140.0	84.6	122.7	0.0	1,721.9	1,319.0	363.6	814.5	2,497.1	4,219.0
2024	662.8	86.6	612.0	130.0	88.9+	115.0	0.0	1,695.3	1,350.2+	448.0	825.9	2,624.1	4,319.4

*Rhode Island general category harvest (mostly rod and reel) shown only; floating fish trap landings confidential in 2018 and 2022-2024.

+ Maryland and Virginia commercial landings for 2024 are considered preliminary.

Table 7. Commercial harvest and discards by region in numbers of fish (x1000), 1998-2024 calendar years. Source: harvest is from state compliance reports, discards is from ASMFC. ^Estimates exclude inshore harvest from NC.

Year	Ocean								Chesapeake Bay				Discards**			Grand Total Removals
	MA	RI	NY	DE	MD	VA	NC^	Total	MD	PRFC	VA	Total	Ocean	Bay	Total	
1998	44.3	8.8	45.1	31.4	10.3	41.1	14.2	195.2	729.6	93.3	197.1	1,020.1	326.7	33.2	359.9	1,575.1
1999	40.9	11.6	49.9	34.8	10.2	48.7	21.1	217.2	776.0	90.6	139.8	1,006.3	316.3	32.5	348.8	1,572.4
2000	42.1	9.4	54.9	25.2	13.3	54.5	6.5	205.8	787.6	91.5	132.0	1,011.0	180.7	32.8	213.5	1,430.3
2001	45.8	10.9	58.3	34.4	11.1	42.3	25.0	227.7	538.8	87.8	77.1	703.7	139.7	43.0	182.7	1,114.1
2002	49.8	11.7	47.1	30.4	10.2	38.8	23.2	211.3	571.7	80.3	64.7	716.8	146.7	51.4	198.1	1,126.2
2003	56.4	15.5	68.4	31.5	11.6	10.5	5.8	199.6	427.9	83.1	143.7	654.7	95.6	33.6	129.2	983.5
2004	63.6	16.0	70.4	28.4	14.1	10.4	31.0	233.9	447.0	92.6	106.3	645.9	108.4	46.6	155.0	1,034.8
2005	60.5	14.9	70.6	26.3	6.1	11.3	27.3	217.1	563.9	80.6	108.9	753.3	84.6	62.4	147.0	1,117.4
2006	70.5	15.4	73.6	30.2	10.9	11.5	2.7	214.9	645.1	92.3	95.4	832.7	96.2	63.7	159.9	1,207.6
2007	54.2	13.9	78.5	31.1	11.6	10.6	16.8	216.7	587.6	86.5	124.3	798.4	93.3	65.4	158.7	1,173.8
2008	61.1	16.6	73.3	31.9	14.0	10.8	13.4	221.0	580.7	82.0	144.1	806.8	62.7	42.6	105.3	1,133.1
2009	59.4	16.8	82.6	21.8	12.5	8.9	9.0	211.1	605.6	89.6	143.8	839.0	58.8	72.8	131.6	1,181.6
2010	60.4	15.7	82.4	19.8	5.4	9.4	13.7	206.8	579.2	90.6	154.9	824.7	39.6	93.7	133.4	1,164.8
2011	58.7	14.3	87.4	20.5	2.1	12.2	10.9	206.0	488.9	96.1	153.7	738.7	34.8	47.4	82.2	1,027.0
2012	61.5	15.0	67.1	15.7	6.9	10.8	0.3	177.3	465.6	90.7	137.0	693.4	26.9	173.0	199.9	1,070.6
2013	58.6	13.8	76.2	17.7	7.6	10.0	0.0	183.8	391.5	78.0	131.0	600.5	37.3	79.6	116.9	901.3
2014	58.0	10.5	52.9	14.9	8.5	10.0	0.0	154.8	362.2	81.5	151.8	595.5	50.4	63.7	114.0	864.3
2015	42.3	11.3	45.6	11.0	2.6	7.7	0.0	120.4	298.3	71.0	132.2	501.5	34.9	49.9	84.8	706.8
2016	48.0	11.7	51.0	8.8	1.2	7.6	0.0	128.3	284.9	73.7	122.2	480.8	42.4	49.9	92.3	701.3
2017	41.2	10.1	61.6	9.5	3.5	7.6	0.0	133.5	263.6	67.5	128.0	459.2	78.1	22.3	100.3	693.0
2018	37.8	4.6*	52.2	11.4	3.5	6.9	0.0	116.4	286.4	64.4	148.4	499.3	56.6	43.9	100.5	716.1
2019	29.6	7.3	28.5	8.2	3.3	6.9	0.0	83.9	356.7	62.6	149.6	568.9	15.9	68.9	84.8	737.6
2020	19.6	5.0	48.1	8.4	3.4	4.42	0.0	89.0	299.9	66.6	126.4	492.9	19.2	41.2	60.4	642.2
2021	36.9	4.6	58.8	9.2	3.6	6.6	0.0	119.6	310.4	68.0	146.2	524.6	11.6	77.8	89.5	733.7
2022	33.0	3.9*	53.9	8.2	3.4	6.3	0.0	108.6	295.3	71.7	146.7	513.7	3.1	41.5	44.6	667.0
2023	29.9	2.6*	55.5	7.4	3.6	5.9	0.0	104.9	284.3	60.7	150.7	495.7	3.7	13.3	17.0	617.6
2024	30.1	3.5*	56.0	8.3	4.1+	6.0	0.0	108.0	292.2+	67.4	136.5	496.1	3.8	13.3	17.1	621.3

** Commercial discards for 2024 estimated applying the 2023 discard-to-landings ratios for each region. The entire time series for commercial dead discards will be re-estimated as part of the 2027 stock assessment. *RI general category harvest only; floating fish trap confidential some years. + MD and VA landings preliminary.

Table 8. Total recreational catch, releases, and release mortality in numbers of fish by region (x1000), 1998-2024. Source: MRIP (Query June 2025). Estimates exclude inshore harvest from NC.

Year	Harvest (A+B1)			Releases (B2)			Total Catch (A+B1+B2)			Release Mortality (9% of B2)		
	Ocean	Bay	Total	Ocean	Bay	Total	Ocean	Bay	Total	Ocean	Bay	Total
1998	1,647	1,268	2,915	29,294	6,918	36,213	30,941	8,187	39,128	2,637	623	3,259
1999	1,758	1,366	3,123	26,139	8,760	34,899	27,897	10,125	38,022	2,353	788	3,141
2000	2,198	1,604	3,802	25,090	8,734	33,824	27,289	10,338	37,627	2,258	786	3,044
2001	2,758	1,294	4,052	21,073	6,145	27,218	23,831	7,440	31,270	1,897	553	2,450
2002	2,756	1,249	4,005	23,653	7,371	31,024	26,409	8,620	35,030	2,129	663	2,792
2003	3,124	1,658	4,781	20,678	10,971	31,649	23,802	12,628	36,431	1,861	987	2,848
2004	3,078	1,475	4,553	27,868	12,857	40,725	30,946	14,332	45,278	2,508	1,157	3,665
2005	3,182	1,299	4,481	28,663	9,580	38,244	31,845	10,879	42,724	2,580	862	3,442
2006	2,789	2,095	4,884	41,239	12,232	53,470	44,028	14,327	58,354	3,711	1,101	4,812
2007	2,327	1,618	3,945	25,135	7,579	32,714	27,462	9,196	36,659	2,262	682	2,944
2008	3,025	1,356	4,381	21,878	4,691	26,569	24,904	6,046	30,950	1,969	422	2,391
2009	2,898	1,803	4,700	16,740	4,838	21,578	19,638	6,641	26,279	1,507	435	1,942
2010	3,906	1,483	5,388	13,606	5,957	19,564	17,512	7,440	24,952	1,225	536	1,761
2011	3,617	1,389	5,006	12,644	3,823	16,467	16,261	5,212	21,473	1,138	344	1,482
2012	3,071	975	4,046	11,242	9,290	20,532	14,314	10,265	24,578	1,012	836	1,848
2013	3,723	1,435	5,158	19,463	7,131	26,594	23,186	8,565	31,751	1,752	642	2,393
2014	2,276	1,758	4,034	15,107	9,031	24,137	17,382	10,789	28,171	1,360	813	2,172
2015	1,770	1,316	3,086	15,419	10,216	25,635	17,189	11,532	28,721	1,388	919	2,307
2016	1,817	1,683	3,500	17,794	15,333	33,127	19,611	17,016	36,627	1,601	1,380	2,981
2017	1,738	1,200	2,938	28,963	9,050	38,012	30,701	10,249	40,950	2,607	814	3,421
2018	1,195	1,050	2,245	22,739	8,669	31,407	23,933	9,719	33,652	2,046	780	2,827
2019	1,342	809	2,151	21,131	7,636	28,767	22,473	8,445	30,918	1,902	687	2,589
2020	923	787	1,710	22,710	7,959	30,669	23,633	8,746	32,379	2,044	716	2,760
2021	1,189	653	1,842	24,281	4,427	28,709	25,470	5,081	30,551	2,185	398	2,584
2022	2,756	697	3,454	26,031	3,611	29,643	28,788	4,309	33,097	2,343	325	2,668
2023	2,036	588	2,624	22,363	3,676	26,040	24,400	4,264	28,664	2,013	331	2,344
2024	1,459	270	1,729	16,486	2,608	19,094	17,945	2,878	20,823	1,484	235	1,718

Table 9. Recreational harvest by region in pounds (x1000), 1998-2024. Source: MRIP (Query June 2025). ^Estimates exclude NC inshore harvest.

Year	Ocean												Chesapeake Bay			Grand Total
	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC^	Total	MD	VA	Total	
1998	305	262	7,359	1,544	1,807	4,889	4,182	645	579	545	636	22,754	3,023	3,826	6,849	29,603
1999	196	181	4,995	1,904	1,327	7,414	9,473	312	3.8	110	339	26,256	2,323	4,986	7,309	33,565
2000	347	109	4,863	2,008	890	7,053	9,768	925	0.0	416	277	26,656	3,503	3,892	7,395	34,051
2001	446	334	7,188	2,044	1,101	5,058	12,314	695	314	382	1,082	30,959	2,928	5,376	8,304	39,263
2002	775	322	10,261	2,708	1,251	5,975	9,621	589	0.0	1,135	998	33,634	2,643	5,563	8,206	41,840
2003	458	466	10,252	4,052	2,666	10,788	12,066	763	14	392	966	42,882	5,246	5,964	11,210	54,092
2004	554	268	9,329	2,460	2,229	6,437	13,303	870	57	1,067	6,656	43,230	4,860	4,941	9,801	53,031
2005	546	384	7,541	3,155	3,133	11,637	14,289	680	7.7	487	3,947	45,808	7,753	3,860	11,614	57,421
2006	610	244	6,787	1,569	2,854	9,845	12,716	586	2.8	921	2,975	39,109	6,494	5,071	11,565	50,674
2007	422	93	7,010	2,077	2,786	10,081	8,390	207	0.0	516	1,965	33,547	5,249	4,027	9,277	42,824
2008	607	182	8,424	970	2,273	18,000	12,407	847	0.0	1,690	750	46,150	5,639	4,877	10,515	56,665
2009	781	222	9,410	2,185	1,458	7,991	17,040	940	138	48	187	40,399	8,672	5,340	14,012	54,411
2010	218	238	9,959	2,102	2,323	18,190	17,454	895	107	206	1,198	52,891	6,482	2,059	8,541	61,431
2011	245	659	11,953	3,066	981	13,151	15,715	605	8.6	308	4,467	51,157	6,220	2,214	8,435	59,592
2012	152	432	14,941	2,096	1,835	13,096	11,551	644	21	1.7	0.0	44,768	3,819	4,670	8,488	53,257
2013	331	831	9,025	4,428	4,236	16,819	19,451	1,073	1,051	67	0.0	57,313	5,137	2,607	7,744	65,057
2014	423	203	7,965	3,402	2,665	13,998	8,886	381	159	0.0	0.0	38,083	8,877	989	9,866	47,949
2015	132	202	7,799	1,394	2,585	8,695	9,982	340	28	0.0	0.0	31,156	7,786	957	8,743	39,899
2016	189	191	3,731	1,776	912	12,053	12,790	86	7.2	0.0	0.0	31,735	10,912	1,024	11,936	43,672
2017	318	394	5,664	1,655	1,560	8,885	10,886	666	0.0	1.8	0.0	30,030	7,309	613	7,922	37,953
2018	142	130	4,925	1,121	1,165	3,453	7,012	33	0.0	0.0	0.0	17,982	4,683	404	5,087	23,069
2019	415	291	2,698	2,300	685	7,072	6,674	44	7.3	0.0	0.0	20,187	3,145	224	3,370	23,556
2020	180	29	776	483	830	2,202	6,584	16	0.0	0.0	0.0	11,100	3,480	280	3,759	14,859
2021	89	36	1,826	597	201	1,492	8,313	132	0	0	0	12,686	2,682	414	3,095	15,782
2022	590	240	5,288	779	1,294	10,695	13,508	39	0	0	0	32,434	3,083	288	3,371	35,805
2023	510	287	3,212	575	769	5,171	10,730	0	31	0	0	21,285	2,195	458	2,653	23,938
2024	318	234	2,414	360	526	4,395	6,070	12	0	0	0	14,328	833	161	995	15,323

Table 10. Recreational harvest by region in numbers of fish (x1000), 1998-2024. Source: MRIP (Query June 2025). ^Estimates exclude NC inshore harvest.

Year	Ocean												Chesapeake Bay			Grand Total
	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC^	Total	MD	VA	Total	
1998	65.3	14.8	500.9	91.1	114.1	383.8	289.2	51.0	24.3	71.3	41.2	1,647.0	596.2	672.2	1,268.4	2,915.4
1999	37.5	9.9	327.1	116.6	88.2	450.9	657.1	28.3	1.6	14.1	26.4	1,757.8	530.9	834.8	1,365.7	3,123.5
2000	77.3	6.0	306.2	156.8	84.0	494.6	939.8	88.3	0.0	27.2	18.1	2,198.3	810.9	793.3	1,604.2	3,802.5
2001	91.9	23.5	551.0	149.8	78.2	364.2	1,267.5	70.6	64.1	36.7	60.7	2,758.1	513.3	781.1	1,294.4	4,052.5
2002	135.2	28.1	723.5	181.5	92.5	439.3	957.6	65.7	0.0	76.4	56.3	2,756.1	464.4	784.6	1,249.0	4,005.1
2003	99.7	41.3	797.2	226.4	181.7	678.4	942.8	75.7	0.9	29.3	50.4	3,123.8	816.0	841.6	1,657.6	4,781.4
2004	118.3	22.1	666.7	159.6	134.5	458.1	1,042.1	66.6	11.0	75.9	323.2	3,078.1	657.5	817.4	1,474.9	4,553.0
2005	118.3	35.5	536.1	195.6	202.6	854.6	958.1	48.8	3.6	34.2	194.9	3,182.2	815.5	483.1	1,298.6	4,480.8
2006	140.9	20.9	483.2	129.3	168.3	614.8	972.2	44.5	0.4	80.6	134.2	2,789.0	1,342.0	753.0	2,094.9	4,884.0
2007	95.5	8.1	471.9	135.8	163.9	602.8	722.2	17.2	0.0	28.0	81.8	2,327.1	1,127.3	490.3	1,617.6	3,944.7
2008	133.4	11.9	514.1	73.4	132.8	1,169.9	791.0	67.7	0.0	94.4	36.9	3,025.4	779.7	576.1	1,355.8	4,381.2
2009	146.5	17.3	695.0	138.4	100.3	574.2	1,141.5	64.8	10.2	3.0	6.5	2,897.7	1,094.4	708.1	1,802.5	4,700.2
2010	37.3	21.4	808.2	162.0	170.2	1,449.0	1,091.4	61.4	12.5	25.3	67.1	3,905.9	1,139.3	343.2	1,482.6	5,388.4
2011	48.5	54.2	873.5	202.2	91.1	1,005.3	1,038.9	43.7	0.8	51.2	207.6	3,617.1	1,112.1	277.2	1,389.3	5,006.4
2012	31.4	37.3	1,010.6	130.7	137.1	927.5	742.4	51.3	2.9	0.3	0.0	3,071.5	716.7	258.1	974.8	4,046.3
2013	73.3	63.2	658.7	308.3	269.6	902.5	1,324.2	70.6	48.4	4.4	0.0	3,723.2	1,136.7	297.9	1,434.5	5,157.8
2014	86.4	16.5	523.5	172.0	131.8	804.5	501.9	26.2	12.6	0.0	0.0	2,275.5	1,627.0	131.2	1,758.2	4,033.7
2015	14.4	10.0	485.3	67.0	140.8	406.8	600.3	41.9	3.5	0.0	0.0	1,770.1	1,108.0	207.7	1,315.7	3,085.7
2016	14.2	17.6	230.1	128.4	63.3	697.7	659.6	5.9	0.5	0.0	0.0	1,817.2	1,545.1	138.1	1,683.2	3,500.4
2017	22.0	37.7	392.3	59.8	94.9	477.3	626.4	27.8	0.0	0.1	0.0	1,738.3	1,091.6	108.0	1,199.6	2,937.9
2018	16.0	13.4	389.5	39.2	85.5	181.7	465.3	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1,194.6	993.3	56.8	1,050.1	2,244.8
2019	38.0	14.7	195.6	104.1	67.1	498.0	412.9	10.9	1.0	0.0	0.0	1,342.2	764.1	44.6	808.7	2,150.9
2020	19.0	3.2	67.2	36.9	71.2	203.7	520.1	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	922.9	734.8	52.2	787.0	1,710.0
2021	12.7	4.4	179.1	57.7	21.2	137.8	766.2	9.496	0.0	0.0	0.0	1,188.6	583.7	69.6	653.3	1,842.9
2022	57.6	23.4	479.9	66.4	116.2	882.9	1,126.5	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2,756.8	642.2	55.0	697.2	3,454.0
2023	62.8	36.1	343.8	51.9	78.9	500.4	959.3	0.0	3.1	0.0	0.0	2,036.1	502.3	86.0	588.3	2,624.4
2024	34.4	25.2	257.8	33.6	51.6	433.0	622.3	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1,459.2	232.6	36.9	269.5	1,728.7

Table 11. Recreational harvest and recreational release mortality by mode for 2022-2024. Source: MRIP (Query July 2025).

Year	Private-Shore Harvest	For-Hire Harvest	Private-Shore Release Mortality	For-Hire Release Mortality
OCEAN				
2022	2,619,253	137,595	2,305,198	37,608
2023	1,967,001	69,135	1,984,532	28,172
2024	1,283,223	62,868	1,348,630	30,030
CHESAPEAKE BAY				
2022	553,480	143,694	310,919	14,121
2023	416,900	171,393	319,434	11,417
2024	173,120	73,483	236,677	9,029
COASTWIDE				
2022	3,172,733	281,289	2,616,117	51,729
2023	2,383,901	240,528	2,303,966	39,589
2024	1,456,343	136,351	1,585,307	39,059

Table 12. Number of directed trips for Atlantic striped bass (primary and secondary target) from Maine through North Carolina (excluding inshore NC) for 2020-2024. Source: MRIP (Query July 2025).

Year	Ocean	Chesapeake Bay	Coastwide Total
2020	15,859,277	2,678,922	**18,538,199**
2021	16,017,420	2,183,568	**18,200,988**
2022	21,044,439	2,132,346	**23,176,785**
2023	18,358,961	2,133,807	**20,492,768**
2024	16,434,248	1,276,206	**17,710,454**

Table 13. Number of directed trips for Atlantic striped bass (primary and secondary target) by mode from Maine through North Carolina (excluding inshore NC) for 2022-2024. Source: MRIP (Query July 2025).

Year	Private-Shore Directed Trips	For-Hire Directed Trips
OCEAN		
2022	20,814,563	229,876
2023	18,191,509	167,453
2024	16,293,296	140,952
CHESAPEAKE BAY		
2022	2,023,852	108,494
2023	2,016,729	117,078
2024	1,174,869	101,338

Table 14. . Results of 2024 commercial quota accounting in pounds. Source: 2025 state compliance reports. 2024 quotas set by Addendum II to Amendment 7.

State	2024 Quota	2024 Harvest	2024 Overage
Ocean			
Maine*	143	-	-
New Hampshire*	3,289	-	-
Massachusetts	683,773	662,810	0
Rhode Island	138,467	General Category: 86,610 Floating Fish Trap: Confidential	0
Connecticut*	13,585	-	-
New York	595,868	612,033	16,165
New Jersey**	200,798	-	-
Delaware	132,501	130,000	0
Maryland	82,857	88,857+	6,000
Virginia	116,282	115,004+	0
North Carolina	274,810	0	0
Ocean Total	**2,242,373**	**1,695,314**	**0**
Chesapeake Bay			
Maryland	1,344,216	1,350,247+	6,031
Virginia	914,555	825,871+	0
PRFC	532,761	443,300	0
Bay Total	**2,791,532**	**2,619,418**	**0**

Note: North Carolina's fishing year is December-November; PRFC's fishing year for gill nets is November-March.

* Commercial harvest/sale prohibited, with no re-allocation of quota.

** Commercial harvest/sale prohibited, with re-allocation of quota to the recreational fishery.

+ Maryland and Virginia commercial landings for 2024 are considered preliminary.

Table 15. Status of Commercial Tagging Programs by state for 2024.

State	Total Participants	Tags Issued	Tags Used	Tags Returned/ Broken/ Lost	Tags Not Accounted For[1]	Point of Tag (sale/ harvest)	Biological Metric[2] (Y/N)	Year, State and Unique ID on Tag (Y/N)	Size Limit on Tag (Y/N)	Tag Colors	Annual Tag Color Change (Y/N)
MA	129	51,240	30,109	20,606	525	Sale	Y	Y	Y	one tag color	Y
RI GC only[3]	18	5,030	3,527	1,409	94	Sale	Y	Y	N	two tag colors by gear	Y
NY	378	60,193	56,008	3,574	611	Harvest	Y	Y	N	one tag color	Y
DE*	241	17,300	8,321	8,906	3	Both	Y	Y	N	Harvest: two tag colors by gear Sale: one color	Y
MD	805	441,000 ±	310,711 ±	104,369 ±	25,920 ±	Harvest	Y	Y	N	three tag colors by fishery and area	Y
PRFC	264	88,051	66,804	20,441	403	Harvest	Y	Y	N	five tag colors by gear	N
VA	362	188,700	142,525	18,720	4,334	Harvest	Y	Y	Y	two tag colors by area	Y
NC	0	0	0	NA	NA	Sale	Y	Y	Y	three tag colors by area	N

[1] Tags not accounted for refers to unused tags that are not returned/not reported as lost.

[2] States are required to allocate commercial tags to permit holders based on a biological metric. Most states use the average weight per fish from the previous year, or some variation thereof. Actual biological metric used is reported in Annual Commercial Tag Monitoring Reports.

[3] Rhode Island tag information only listed for the general category (GC) fishery, which is mostly rod/reel. Floating fish trap harvest for 2024 are confidential.

*The number of tags noted in the table for Delaware are the tags issued to and used by harvesters. Tags are also issued to weigh stations where a second tag is attached to each striped bass, such that each fish has two tags.

± Maryland's tag accounting is preliminary.

Note: North Carolina's fishing year is December-November; PRFC's fishing year for gill nets is November-March.

Table 16. Status of compliance with monitoring and reporting requirements in 2024. JAI = juvenile abundance index survey, SSB = spawning stock biomass survey, TAG = participation in coastwide tagging program, Y = compliance standards met, N = compliance standards not met, NA = not applicable, R = recreational, C = commercial.

Jurisdiction	Fishery-independent Monitoring		Fishery-dependent Monitoring		Annual reporting Status
	Requirement(s)	Status	Requirement(s)	Status	
ME	JAI	Y	-	NA	Y
NH	-	NA	-	NA	Y
MA	TAG	Y	composition, catch & effort (C&R), tag program	Y	Y
RI	-	NA	composition (C&R), catch & effort (R), tag program	Y	Y
CT	-	NA	composition, catch & effort (R)	Y	Y
NY	JAI, SSB, TAG	Y	composition, catch & effort (C&R), tag program	Y	Y
NJ	JAI, TAG	Y	composition, catch & effort (R)	Y	Y
PA	SSB	Y	-	NA	Y
DE	SSB, TAG	Y	composition, catch & effort (C), tag program	Y	Y
MD	JAI, SSB, TAG	Y	composition, catch & effort (C&R), tag program	Y	Y
PRFC	-	NA	composition, catch & effort (C&R), tag program	Y	Y
DC	-	NA	-	NA	Y
VA	JAI, SSB, TAG	Y	composition, catch & effort (C&R), tag program	Y	Y
NC	JAI, SSB, TAG	Y	composition, catch & effort (C&R), tag program	Y	Y

XI. Figures

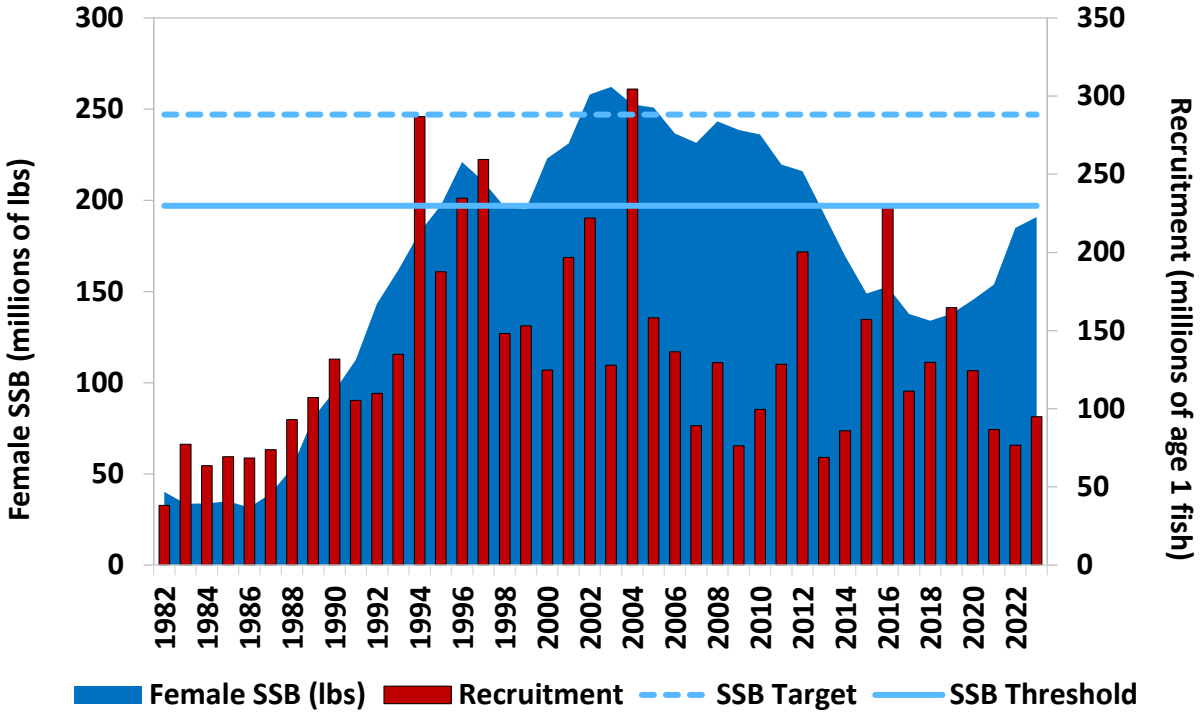

Figure 1. Atlantic striped bass female spawning stock biomass and recruitment, 1982-2023. Source: 2024 Stock Assessment Update.

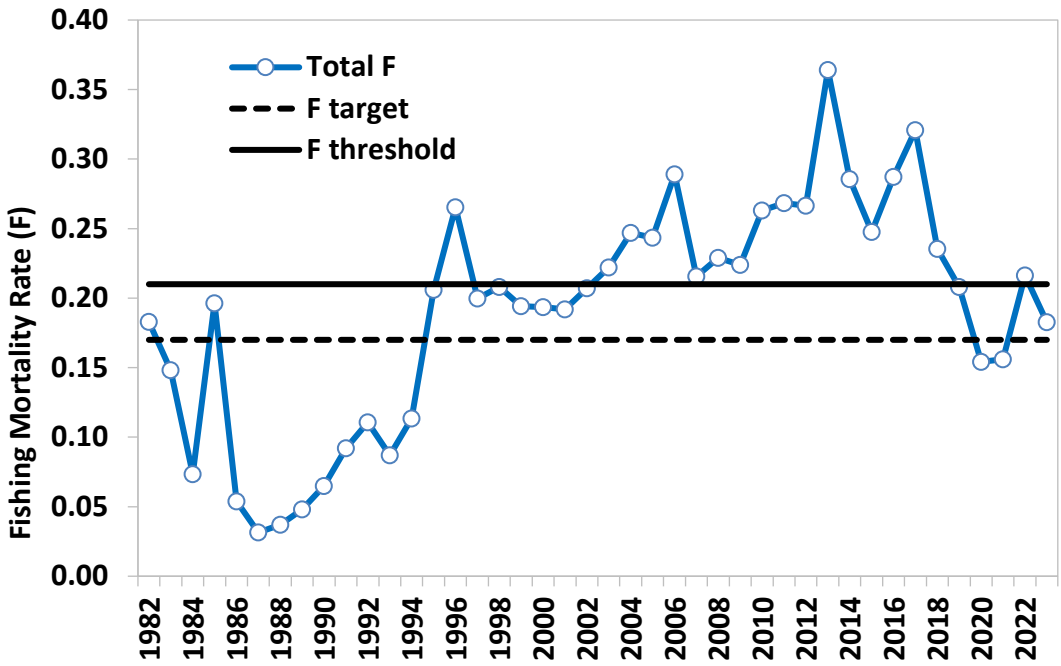

Figure 2. Atlantic striped bass fishing mortality, 1982-2023. Source: 2024 Stock Assessment Update.

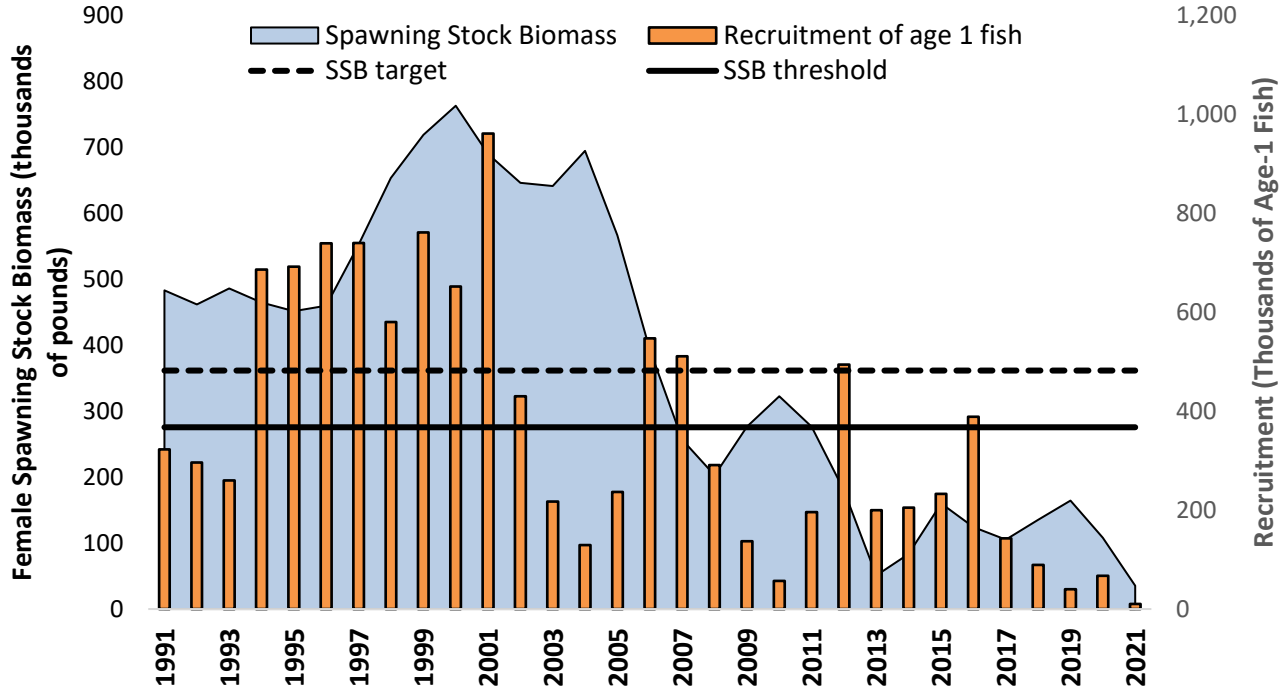

Figure 3. Albemarle Sound-Roanoke River striped bass female spawning stock biomass and recruitment (abundance of age-1), and biological reference points, 1991-2021. Source: 2022 A-R Stock Assessment (Lee et al. 2022).

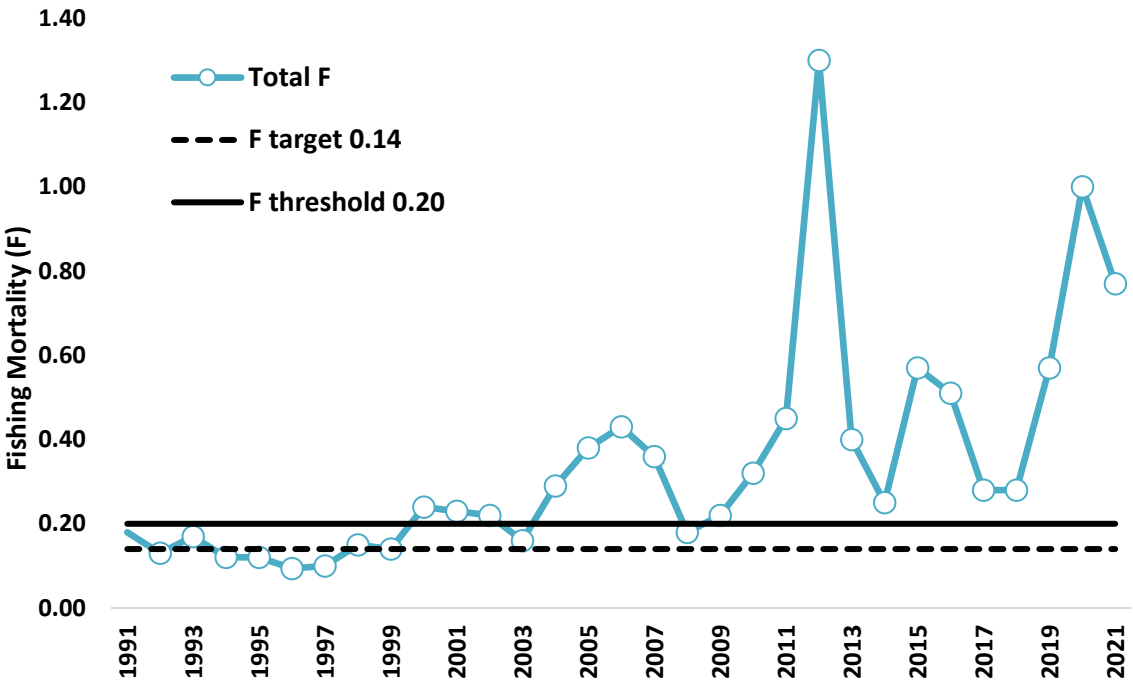

Figure 4. Albemarle Sounds-Roanoke River striped bass fishing mortality (F) estimates, and biological reference points, 1991-2021. Source: 2022 A-R Stock Assessment (Lee et al. 2022).

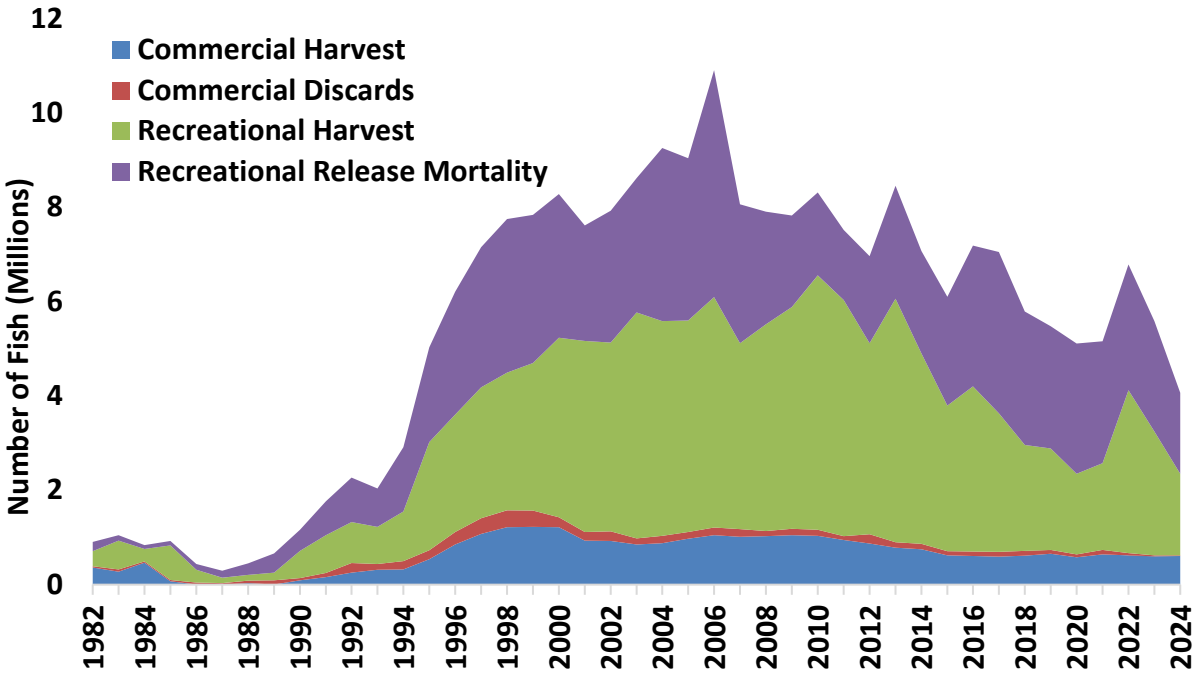

Figure 5. Total Atlantic striped bass removals by sector in numbers of fish, 1982-2024. Note: Harvest is from state compliance reports/MRIP, discards/release mortality is from ASMFC. Estimates exclude inshore harvest from A-R.

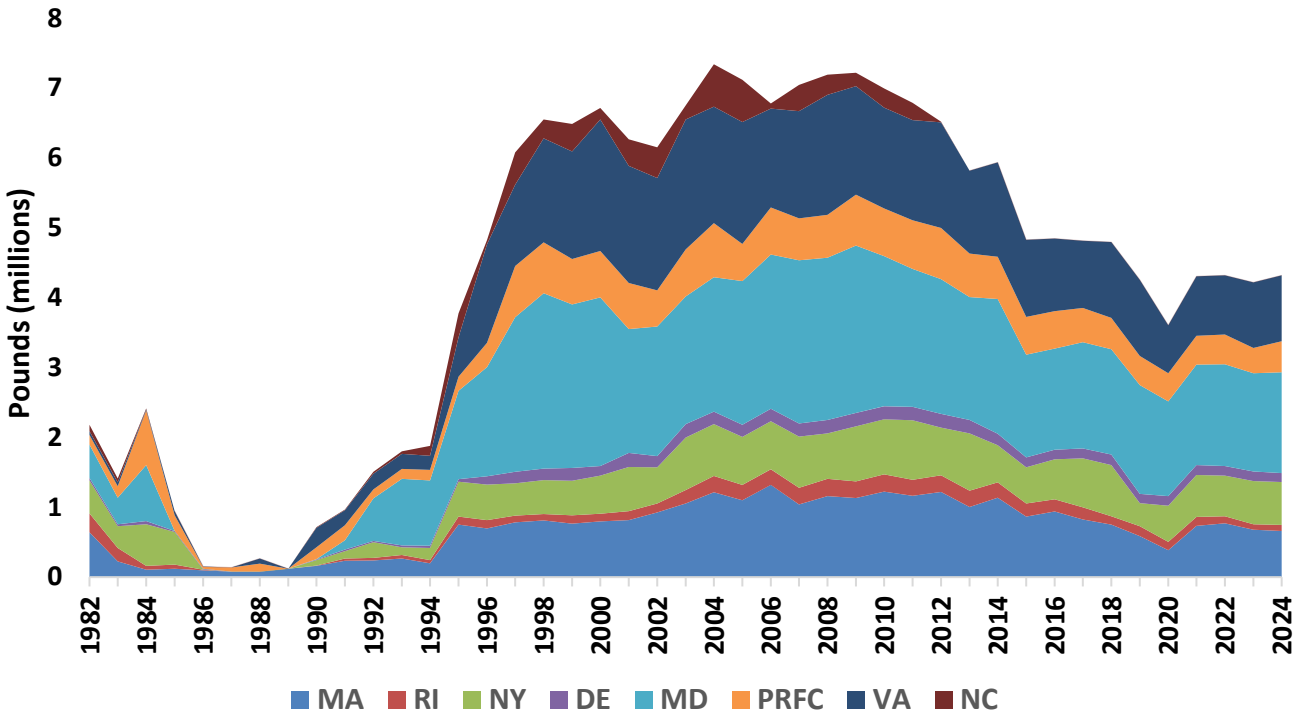

Figure 6. Commercial Atlantic striped bass landings by state in pounds, 1982-2024. Source: State compliance reports. Commercial harvest and sale prohibited in ME, NH, CT, and NJ. NC is ocean only.

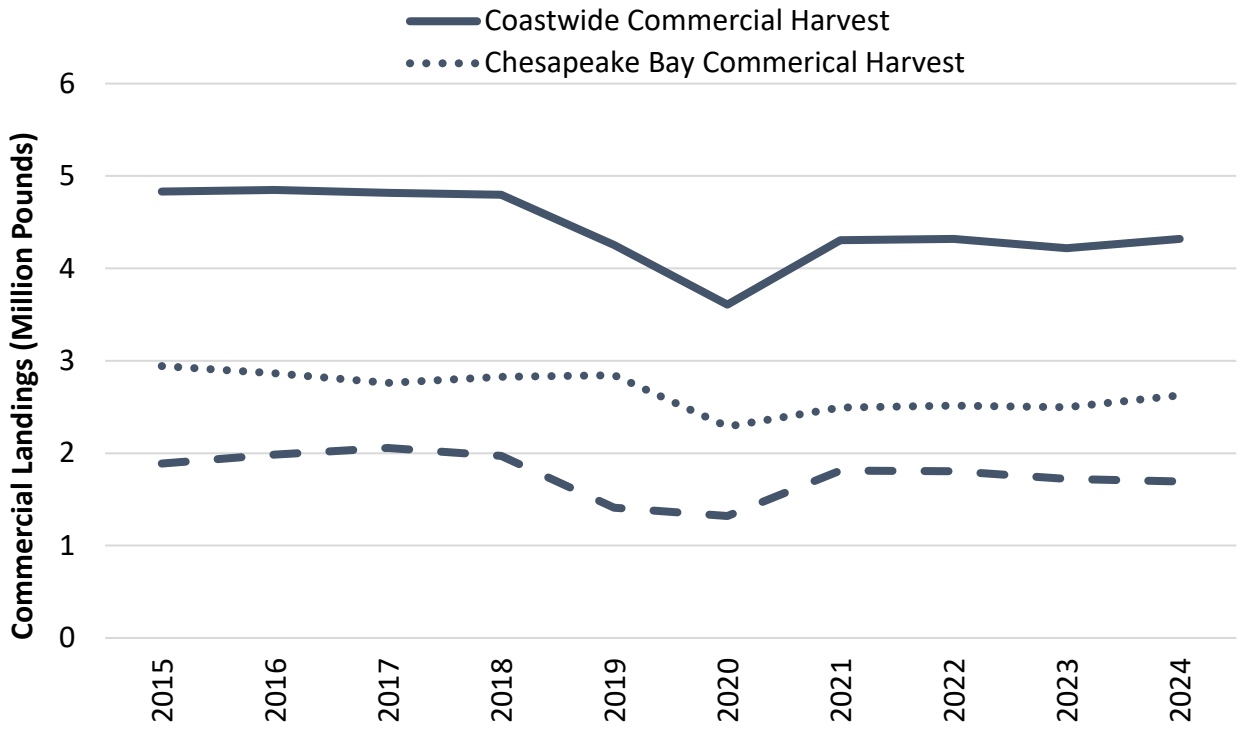

Figure 7. Commercial harvest by region for 2015-2024. Source: 2025 State Compliance Reports.

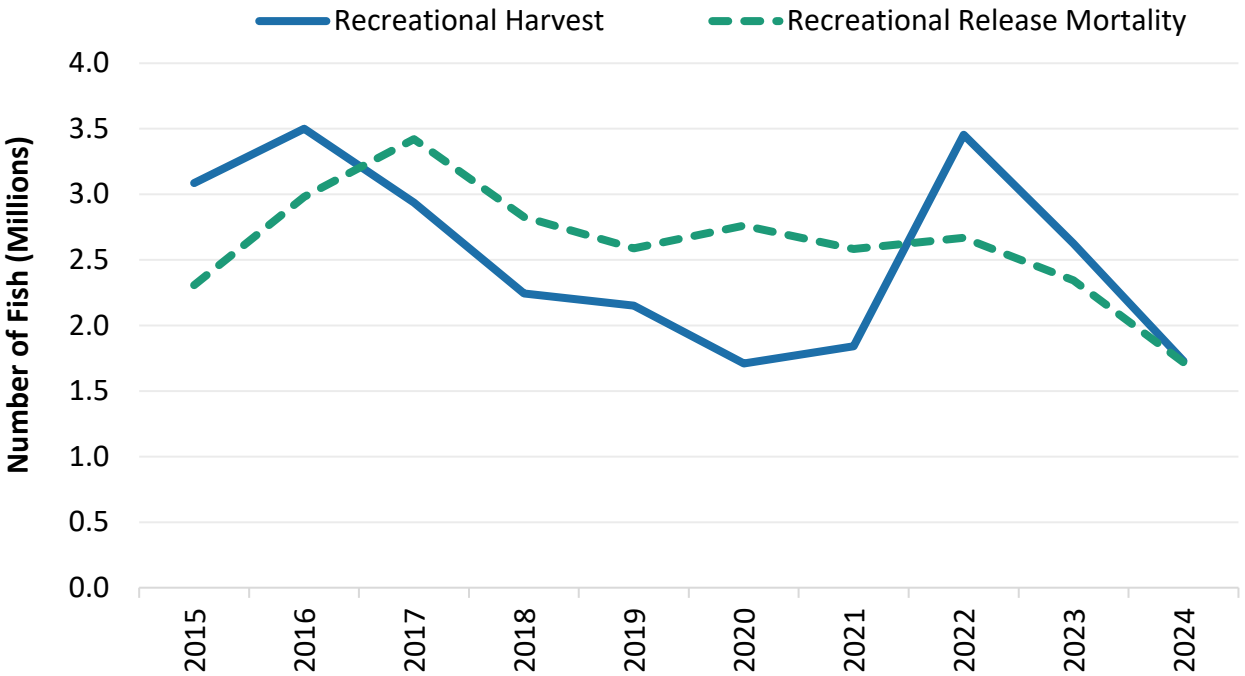

Figure 8. Coastwide recreational harvest and recreational release mortality from 2015-2024. Source: MRIP (June 2025).

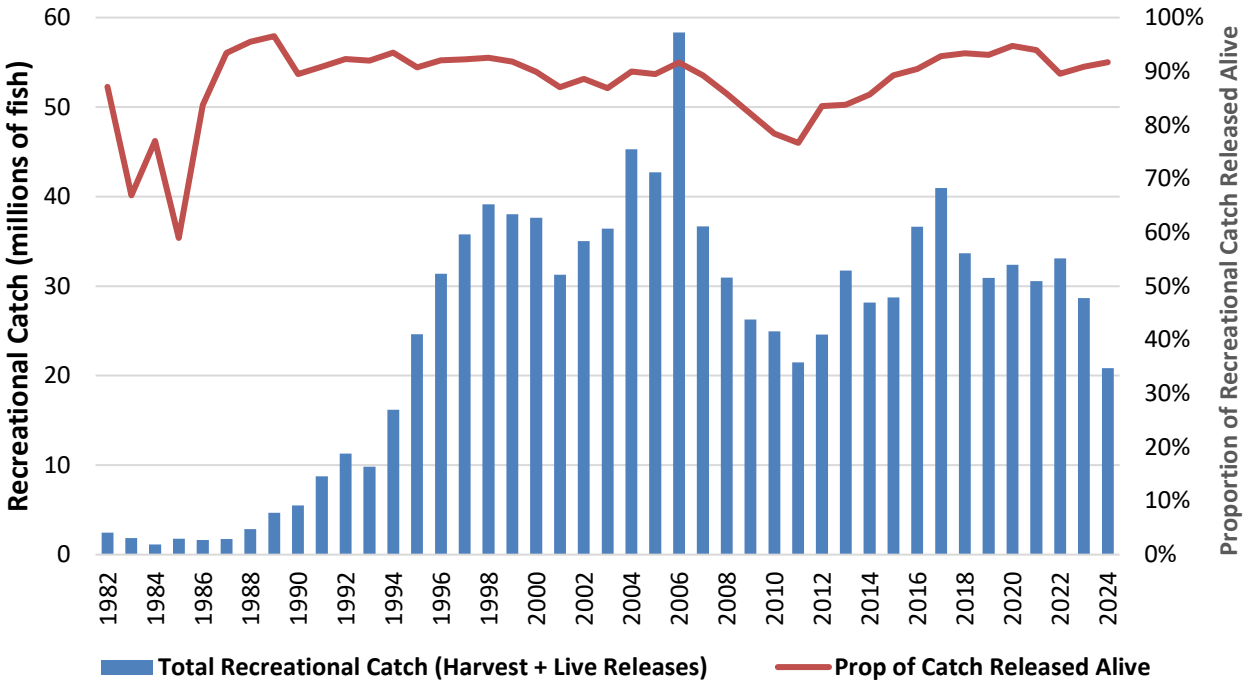

Figure 9. Total recreational catch and the proportion of fish released alive, 1982-2023. Source: MRIP (June 2025).

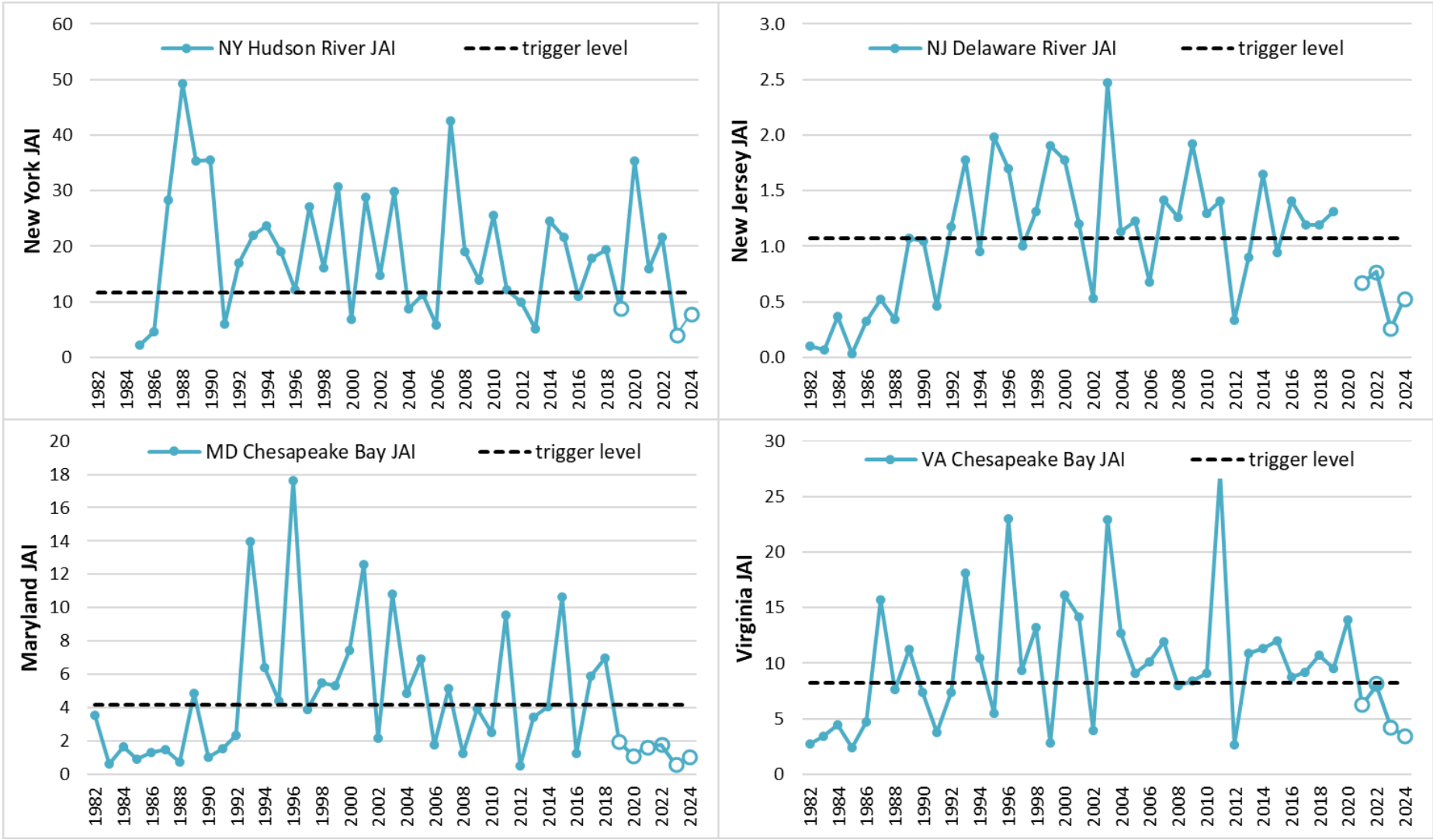

Figure 10. Juvenile abundance indices for New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia for 1982-2024 with recruitment trigger analysis for recent years. An open circle in the last three years indicates a value below the recruitment trigger level. The recruitment trigger is tripped if a JAI is below the trigger level for three consecutive years. Source: 2025 State Compliance Reports.

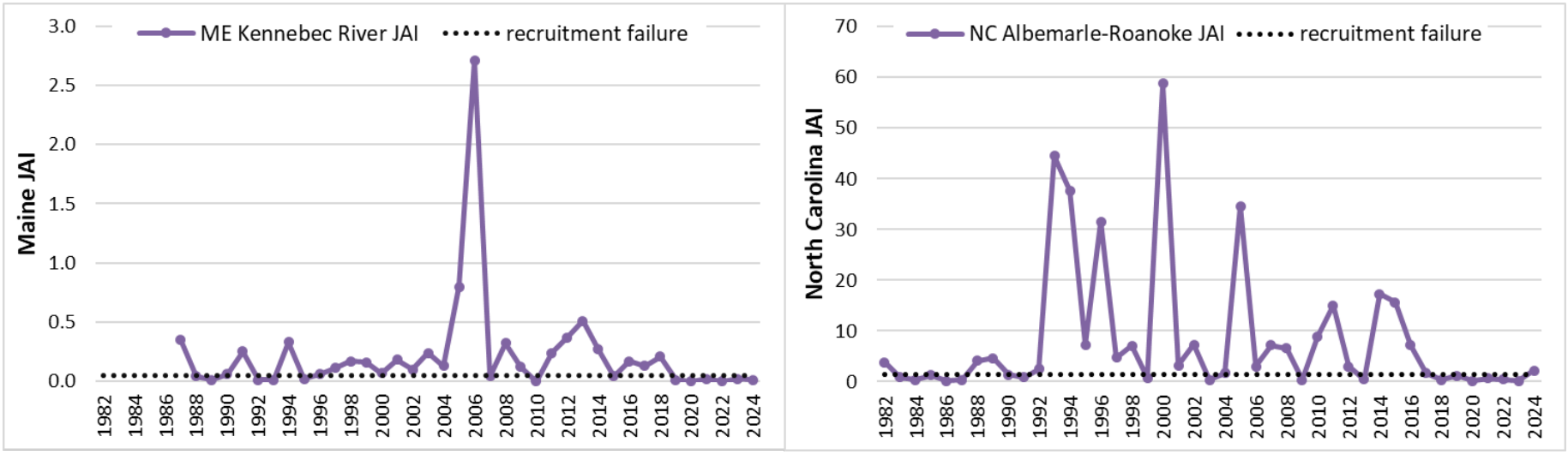

Figure 11. Juvenile abundance indices for Maine and North Carolina from 1982-2022 noting the level of recruitment failure. Source: 2023 State Compliance Reports.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

FROM: **Emilie Franke, Plan Review Team Chair and FMP Coordinator**

DATE: **July 29, 2025**

SUBJECT: **State Overviews of Striped Bass Commercial Tagging Program**

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board tasked the Plan Review Team with reviewing the striped bass commercial tagging program since it has been over a decade since the program was implemented. Requirements for striped bass commercial tagging programs were implemented in 2013 via Addendum III to Amendment 6 to the Interstate FMP for Atlantic Striped Bass and are maintained in Amendment 7 (section 3.1.1).

The PRT and state commercial tagging contacts met via webinar on July 24 and July 30, 2025, with the following meeting objectives:

1. Inform the Board: Compile a summary of each state's tagging program.
2. Look Across Programs: Report any key observations and takeaways across programs, including common challenges faced by multiple states and the various biological metrics used to determine the number of tags for each season.
3. Share Information: Opportunity for states to share best practices and information on common issues, challenges, and solutions.
4. Streamline Reporting: Minimize duplicate information submitted in annual commercial tagging reports vs. annual state compliance reports. Confirm what information is most useful to law enforcement in tagging reports (e.g., tag color) vs. what is more relevant in state compliance reports (e.g., tag accounting).

Each state provided a written overview of their tagging program (enclosed here). An overview of the PRT discussion will be provided during the August 2025 Board meeting with a written report to follow.

Massachusetts

Overview of Striped Bass Commercial Tagging Program

A. Striped Bass Commercial Fishery Overview

1. Type of Management (e.g., ITQ, limited entry, etc.):
   Open entry

2. Point of Tagging (harvest and/or sale):
   Point of sale

3. Number of Participants Receiving Commercial Tags
   If a state has gear-specific tags, it is optional to list participants by gear type. At a minimum, please provide some insight into the prevalence of different gears in question #4.
   Maryland and Virginia please separate Ocean vs. Chesapeake Bay.

	# Participants Receiving Tags
2020	170*
2021	131
2022	124
2023	128
2024	129

*In 2020, there was a spike in harvesters purchasing the Retail Boat Seafood Dealer permit in order to act as their own dealer and sell fish straight off the boat during COVID.

4. Gears Used (please indicate which are most common):
   Rod & reel (no other gears authorized)

5. 2024 Commercial Measures:

Gear	**Size Limit**	**Trip Limit**	**Quota**	**Open Seasons***
Rod & Reel	35” minimum size	15-fish Boat-based permits, 2-fish for all other	683,773 lbs	• June 16–September 30: Tuesdays & Wednesdays, with Thursday added on August 1 if ≥ 30% quota remains • October 1–November 15: Monday–Friday if quota remains

* In 2024, the de facto season was Tuesdays & Wednesdays, June 16 –August 13 (2024 quota filled)

6. *Optional:* Provide any additional information about the commercial fishery the state would like to explain.

   The Massachusetts commercial striped bass endorsement is an open entry endorsement. 4,555 endorsements have been issued in 2025. Typically, only about a quarter of issued striped bass endorsements are active in a year. The tradition of open access participation in this fishery has been intended to foster the cultural and historical aspects of the fishery and to support those that may be interested in pursuing fishing as an occupation or as a gateway to other employment in the marine economy. This works in MA given the highly restrictive rules on gear, season/days, and possession limit. Transitioning to point-of-harvest tagging in Massachusetts would necessitate DMF to limit entry and not renew the majority of permits given current administrative resources.

B. Biological Metric, Number of Tags, and Program Operation

1. Describe the biological metric used to determine the number of tags printed and issued to participants:

   An average weight of commercially harvested fish from the prior year is used to convert the current year quota in weight to number of fish. Generally, about twice as many tags are ordered as projected to be used to ensure sufficient supply under the dealer-tagging based approach. Tags are distributed to dealers who have declared their intent to act as primary purchasers of striped bass that year according to their prior year purchases, plus a buffer to minimize the need to fulfill in-season requests for additional tags. Buyers with no/limited history receive a minimum default number of tags. Requests for additional tags are fulfilled after reviewing the buyer's in-season transactions, with the amount of tags provided based on their activity level and remaining quota amount.

   For example, for the 2025 season, an average weight of 22 lb/fish (based on preliminary 2024 landings/reported tag use and market sampling) was used to estimate that the Commonwealth's 2025 quota of 683,773 lb will require approximately 31,081 tags to fill. DMF ordered a total of 65,000 tags, allowing us to stage extra tags at both our Gloucester and New Bedford offices in case seafood dealers need more throughout the season. DMF reviewed the 2024 purchase history of each Primary Buyer authorized for striped bass purchases and established an initial tag issuance based on the total pounds purchased and an average weight of 22 lb/fish, plus a 20% buffer. Authorized primary buyers with no or limited purchase history received a default initial issuance of 20 tags. Subsequent tag issuances will be completed upon request based on the Primary Buyer's in-season transactions (as

documented by SAFIS dealer reporting records) and the remaining quota level. An average of 30 in-season requests for additional tags were fulfilled the prior two years.

2. Number of Tags Issued and Tags Not Accounted For:

	# Tags Issued	Percent of Tags Not Accounted For*
2020	46,520	2.98% (1,388)
2021	46,760	1.78% (834)
2022	58,560	1.09% (640)
2023	54,560	1.05% (574)
2024	51,240	1.02% (525)

**Tags not accounted for refers to unused tags that were not returned/not reported as lost.*

3. What is the process and timing for tag distribution? E.g., tags distributed by mail during the month of November before the fishery opens on January 1.

Tags are distributed during the month of May before the fishery opens in mid-June. Depending on dealer location, tags are delivered by DMF staff/Environmental Police, mailed, or picked up at a DMF office.

4. Are tags allowed to be transferred between individuals? If so, how are transfers monitored?

No.

5. Does the state require data about the use of each tag to be reported back to the state? This could include sale date, poundage of each fish tagged, etc.

No.

6. Describe the process for returning and auditing unused tags.

Approximately 2-3 weeks after the season closes, DMF mails an accounting report to each dealer that received tags during the season. The reports identify the number of tags issued to the dealer and the total weight of striped bass they reported purchasing, and asks for the number of tags being returned, the number of tags lost,

and the number of tags damaged. The signed accounting reports and any unused tags are required to be returned to a DMF office withing 30 days. DMF staff follow up with phone calls, emails, and letters if needed. DMF then audits the number of tags returned against the calculated number to tags a dealer should have remaining based on the landings reported to the SAFIS database.

7. Describe how the state responds to non-compliance with commercial tagging or reporting requirements (e.g., failure to return unused tags, submit mandatory reports, etc.)?

   Discrepancies and delinquent reports are followed up on and dealers found out of compliance may be denied tags the following year. Denial of tag issuance occurs infrequently but the threat acts as a solid deterrent to violating the tag accounting requirements. Delinquent reports have most frequently originated from dealers with no or minimal striped bass purchasing history who receive the default allotment. Dealers who are out of compliance with their SAFIS dealer reporting requirements are not allowed to renew for the following year until their reporting is completed.

C. Program Changes and Challenges

1. Identify any major changes and challenges with the commercial tagging program over the past ten years. Feel free to use the following categories to organize various issues or modify/add categories as needed.

   Tag Procurement/Distribution: **During COVID, there was a significant delay in receiving our tag orders from Cambridge Security Seals. Over the past few years that delay is gone and we have received our tags in 2-3 weeks. Between 2016 and 2025 the cost of a tag rose from $.05 to $.0906. DMF pays for the tags.**

   In terms of distribution, DMF staff now reach out to smaller dealers or dealers with no recent primary buyer history to confirm they want tags before staff drop them off. This minimizes the number of inactive dealers receiving tags and, consequently, the number of unused tags that need to be returned.

   Tag Accounting/Return of Unused Tags:

   We have found that it is much easier to recover tags and accounting reports if the striped bass season closes before Labor Day. After Labor Day, seasonal businesses close and we spend more time reaching out to businesses to recover tags. With our current quota, regulations, and fish availability the season has been closing prior to Labor Day for the past several years. Fishery dynamics in 2018–2020 that lead to the fishery not taking its quota and thus not closing until December 31

prompted DMF to adopt a November 15 default closure date to aid in tag accounting prior to the end of the year and the onset of the permit renewal season.

DMF's commercial harvester and dealer reporting forms collect the weight of striped bass sold, but not the number of fish, which necessitates the use of average fish weights to conduct tag accounting processes. Consideration is being given to modifying these forms to collect the number of striped bass sold. This would also aid in the enforcement of the striped bass possession limits (which are in numbers of fish).

Enforcement:

Other:

2. For states who tag at the point of sale: Since Draft Addendum III includes an option to require tagging at point or harvest, identify any major challenges the state's commercial tagging program may encounter by transitioning to point of harvest.

The biggest challenge for Massachusetts in transitioning to point of harvest tagging would be the open entry nature of our permit system. For the past three years we have issued over 4,500 commercial striped bass endorsements. At current staffing levels we could not administer a point of harvest tagging program to that many permit holders. We would likely need to limit entry and then reduce the number of permit holders to somewhere between 400 and 500. Administering a tagging program to that number of permit holders would be more feasible. Were DMF to limit entry to the fishery under a harvester tagging requirement, we do not anticipate adopting an Individual Fishing Quota management approach like every other point of harvest tagging state has (and already had when coastwide tagging was instituted). This means that DMF would likely be in a position of needing to either distribute many more tags than required to fill the quota or having to fulfill many in-season requests for additional tags (or both). Additionally, harvesters are more widespread throughout the state, including remote locations (i.e., Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket) than primary buyers, further burdening the process of tag distribution and return.

D. Program Successes

1. Identify how challenges are being addressed/resolved and any other major successes the state would like highlight from the past ten years.

In recent years, DMF received feedback from law enforcement that in some instances striped bass were being dropped off at seafood dealers after hours and in some instances the harvesters were affixing the dealer tags to the fish themselves. In response to this, DMF updated its tagging regulations in 2024 to specifically require both the commercial harvester and primary buyer dealer be present at the primary sale and the fish must be tagged immediately. Law enforcement reports this activity stopped and some dealers started having staff stay later to accept fish after the regulation change.

2. Would the state deem its current tagging program as a success in minimizing illegal harvest? Are there ongoing sources of illegal commercial harvest?

   The current tagging program has been successful at increasing accountability at primary buyer dealers and throughout the supply chain. For example, untagged striped bass found at a restaurant or seafood market are easily identified as potentially illegal. This reduces the ability of harvesters to make "back door" deals and not sell to a permitted primary buyer. Law enforcement, however, still deals with illegal commercial harvest by both permitted and unpermitted harvesters at a modest level.

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Division of Marine Fisheries

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TO: Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, ASMFC

FROM: Nicole Lengyel Costa, RI DEM, Striped Bass TC Member

DATE: July 18, 2025

SUBJECT: 2025 Overview of Striped Bass Commercial Tagging Program

Please find a copy of Rhode Island's 2025 overview of the striped bass commercial tagging program. Red text throughout this report indicates confidential data. All floating fish trap data, and total commercial pounds landed are confidential. If you have any questions, you may contact me directly at 401.423.1940.

RHODE ISLAND

Overview of Striped Bass Commercial Tagging Program

A. Striped Bass Commercial Fishery Overview

1. Type of Management (e.g., ITQ, limited entry, etc.):
   RI has a limited entry fishery. New licenses are only issued based on the retirement of existing licenses. An exit:entry ratio and detailed prioritization for issuance can be found at: https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/250-90-00-2

2. Point of Tagging (harvest and/or sale):
   Point of sale. Several harvesters are also licensed dealers; therefore, some tagging is already occurring at point of harvest.

3. Number of Participants Receiving Commercial Tags
   If a state has gear-specific tags, it is optional to list participants by gear type. At a minimum, please provide some insight into the prevalence of different gears in question #4.
   Maryland and Virginia please separate Ocean vs. Chesapeake Bay.

	# Participants Receiving Tags	
	General Category	**Floating Fish Trap**
2020	23	3
2021	20	C
2022	18	C
2023	18	C
2024	18	C

4. Gears Used (please indicate which are most common):
   General category: All gears except gillnet and floating fish trap are allowed. The most common is rod & reel.
   Floating fish trap: Restricted to floating fish traps.

5. 2024 Commercial Measures:

Gear	**Size Limit**	**Trip Limit**	**Quota**	**Open Seasons**
General Category	34”	5 fish pp or 5 fish/vsl	84,465	6/11 – 6/20; 7/9 – 12/31*
Floating Fish Trap	26”	Unlimited**	54,002	4/1 – 12/31

* Closed Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday throughout. Only open until quota reached.
**Once eighty percent (80%) of the seasonal allocation is projected to be harvested, the possession limit shall be five hundred (500) pounds per floating fish trap licensee per calendar day.

6. *Optional:* Provide any additional information about the commercial fishery the state would like to explain.

   The general category (GC) fishery is typically less than 14 days, it was only 8 days on 2025. The GC fishery operate in June – early July and then closes. In some years when the floating fish trap (FFT) quota is not fully harvested by September 15, the RIDEM may transfer pounds to the GC and re-open the GC fishery. There is typically a 2-3 month closure before a GC re-opening. As a result, dealers keep their unused tags after the initial closure because they may need them again in the fall for a re-opening. During this closure period, it is common for tags to be inadvertently discarded or lost.

   For 2025, we will be encouraging dealers to return unused tags after the initial GC closure to avoid tag losses. We will then re-issue tags in the fall should the fishery re-open.

B. Biological Metric, Number of Tags, and Program Operation

1. Describe the biological metric used to determine the number of tags printed and issued to participants:

   Number of tags printed: Based on the striped bass biological data collected in 2024, the average weights of general category and floating fish trap striped bass were used to estimate the number of tags needed. Based on our Amendment 7 quota (148,889 lbs; 90,822 lbs GC; 58,067 lbs FFT) that would equate to ~4,000 general category and 10,000 floating fish trap tags respectively. The DMF always orders extra tags for a buffer as the number of tags used each year can vary with fish size.

   Number of tags issued: Dealers are given an initial allotment of tags based on how timely their reporting was the previous calendar year, e.g., 25-200 tags at a time. Dealers may receive additional tags only if they submit tag reports for each tag they have already used and are up to date with their required Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) reporting requirement. Dealers are required to report to SAFIS within 24 hours of purchase so staff can accurately track the commercial quota. If a dealer fails to report in a timely fashion, their allotment amount will be reduced.

2. Number of Tags Issued and Tags Not Accounted For:

	# Tags Issued	**Percent of Tags Not Accounted For***
2020	13,760	7%
2021	13,640	12%**
2022	16,210	3%
2023	12,610	1%

2024	10,030	3%

**Tags not accounted for refers to unused tags that were not returned/not reported as lost.*
*** See section C(1) for further details on 2021*

3. What is the process and timing for tag distribution? E.g., tags distributed by mail during the month of November before the fishery opens on January 1.

   Tag distribution begins ~ 1 month prior to the start of a commercial season and occurs throughout the season. Tags are available for pickup M-F, 8:30 – 4pm, at two RIDEM offices in Jamestown and Narragansett.

4. Are tags allowed to be transferred between individuals? If so, how are transfers monitored?

   No

5. Does the state require data about the use of each tag to be reported back to the state? This could include sale date, poundage of each fish tagged, etc.

   Yes, for each fish purchased, the dealer must report:
   - Date landed
   - Pounds
   - Tag #
   - Fisher name
   - Fisher license #

6. Describe the process for returning and auditing unused tags.

   Dealers are required to submit data reports for all tags used and any unused tags by January 1 the following calendar year. Data reports may be emailed, faxed, mailed or dropped off in person. Unused tags may be mailed back or dropped off in person.

   An access database is used to track all striped bass tags distributed, returned as unused, and reported as used. RIDEM staff query the database following the January 1 deadline each year and reach out to dealers to request data reports and unused tags.

7. Describe how the state responds to non-compliance with commercial tagging or reporting requirements (e.g., failure to return unused tags, submit mandatory reports, etc.)?

Dealers who fail to account for all of their tags, or submit dealer reports late when the season is open, may be restricted the following calendar year. Restrictions may include receiving a reduced number of tags or no tags at all. Dealers who have had their tag allotment reduced, may have it increased again once they demonstrate improved compliance.

For 2026, Marine Fisheries staff plan to coordinate with our Division of Law Enforcement to ensure increased compliance with returning tags and data reports from 2025.

C. Program Changes and Challenges

1. Identify any major changes and challenges with the commercial tagging program over the past ten years. Feel free to use the following categories to organize various issues or modify/add categories as needed.

   Tag Procurement/Distribution:
   - In 2021, following the covid-19 pandemic, tag distribution changed to reduce the risk of staff becoming sick. The tagging database was queried to determine the number of striped bass typically used by a dealer in a year. The full number of tags was then given to the dealer. This method of distribution ended due to increased non-compliance of returning unused tags and dealers reporting they lost tags when given larger amounts initially.

   Tag Accounting/Return of Unused Tags:
   - Changes in staff responsibility for the tagging program from 2020 – 2021 led to less rigorous audits in those years and consequently, the % of tags unaccounted for in those years increased.

   Enforcement:
   - Tagging program staff and DLE intend to work closely in 2026 to ensure increased compliance for returning unused tags and data reports for 2025.

   Other:

2. For states who tag at the point of sale: Since Draft Addendum III includes an option to require tagging at point or harvest, identify any major challenges the state's commercial tagging program may encounter by transitioning to point of harvest.

   If RI is required to transition to tagging at the point of harvest, there will be several negative consequences and the administrative burden of the program will drastically increase.
   - RI currently distributes tags to 18 individuals for our general category fishery. If harvester tagging is required, the number of individuals who will receive

tags will significantly increase. Since RI does not have an ITQ, a striped bass license, or a striped bass endorsement, RI will be forced to issue tags to any individual with a license authorized to catch and retain striped bass. In 2025, there are currently 1,017 license holders who would be authorized to receive striped bass tags with harvester-required tagging. At a possession limit of 5 fish/person/day, and a commercial general category season that typically lasts a minimum of 8 days, RIDEM may have to distribute 40,680 tags just for the general category fishery. In 2024, 5,030 tags were issued to the general category fishery. This is a potential increase of 35,650 tags that would need to be distributed and accounted for.

  - Data from our tautog tagging program, which has point of harvest tagging, shows a similar pattern where the number of tags issued is significantly more than the number of tags used.
  - The tautog tagging program consistently issues ~25,000 tags each year to ~300 harvesters that end up using 12-13k tags.
  - Based on what we have seen with the tautog program, we expect we will have to purchase and distribute significantly more tags if we switch to point of harvest tagging as explained above.

- Our floating fish trap fishery is a high-volume fishery that operates under an unlimited possession limit. Having to tag at the point of harvest would significantly impact their operations by increasing the processing time of catch. The nature of this fishery makes it a very clean fishery with little discards due to their ability to quickly return regulatory discards to the water alive. Increased processing time for catch could impact this aspect of their operation and cause unnecessary dead discards. In recent years, floating fish trap harvesters have also been licensed dealers and typically tag fish at the point of landings.
- Having to purchase an additional 35-40k tags each year will increase costs to RIDEM by $3500.
- The increased number of tags that would need to be distributed would lead to an increased burden for auditing tags. Staff spend a significant amount of time auditing the tagging data and reaching out to dealers to request that they return their tagging data and unused tags. At this point in time, RIDEM does not have the staff and resources to perform the same auditing procedures if the number of individuals receiving tags and number of tags distributed were to increase to the level described above. This would lead to an increased number of tags that are unaccounted for and could increase illegal activity.
- Switching from dealer to harvester reporting would decrease our ability to closely track our striped bass quota to prevent quota overages. Striped bass dealers are currently required to report landings to SAFIS within 24 hours of purchasing to facilitate quota monitoring and projections. Given that the general category fishery only lasts ~ 8 days, timely quota monitoring is important for preventing overages. The striped bass tagging program is used

to ensure compliance with the 24-hour dealer reporting rule. Dealers who are non-compliant with the 24-hour SAFIS reporting are not issued additional striped bass tags until they enter compliance. If tagging is harvester based, RIDEM staff will have to resort to taking legal administrative action against the dealer. This is a long process and would not allow for any immediate action to prevent quota overages.

  - For example, Dealer A receives 200 striped bass tags. The season opens on Tuesday and Dealer A buys 75 fish on Tuesday and 100 fish on Wednesday. With only 25 tags left, Dealer A comes into the office to get more striped bass tags on Thursday. Staff check our dealer compliance file and see that Dealer A has not reported any striped bass to SAFIS for Tuesday or Wednesday. Dealer A will be refused additional tags until they submit SAFIS reports and provide documentation to prove reports have been submitted.
  - If harvesters are required to tag fish, when Dealer A does not report their landings to SAFIS, there is no immediate mechanism to force them to report or even if we know that they are withholding reports. Dealer A ends up reporting their landings the following week, 7 days late, and RI exceeds their annual quota. Administrative action to suspend Dealer A's license could take 6+ months.

- RI DEM DLE is concerned that with up to 40k additional tags being distributed, including to fishers who are not currently active but have a license authorizing the harvest of striped bass, these tags could be placed on fish prior to being sold on the illegal market, making them indistinguishable from a legally sold fish through a licensed dealer. These tags could also be attached to the fish after the season has closed or by recreational fishers who obtained tags from a non-active commercial license holder. Our enforcement efforts would then be focused on the disposition of unused and unreturned tags (attached to illegal market fish, lost, broken) months after these fish were harvested and these cases would be a challenge to prosecute.

D. Program Successes

1. Identify how challenges are being addressed/resolved and any other major successes the state would like highlight from the past ten years.

    - Successes: Increased compliance with dealer reporting that prevents quota overages
    - Challenges: getting dealers to return unused tags and data reports. Staff will be working closely with DLE in 2026 to increase compliance with returning unused tags and data reports.

2. Would the state deem its current tagging program as a success in minimizing illegal harvest? Are there ongoing sources of illegal commercial harvest?

   RI has had a commercial tagging program since 1990, 24 years prior to ASMFC requiring tagging programs. We have consistently had the same program as far as distribution and accounting with the exception of 2021 as described above.

   RI views our program as a success with little evidence to support ongoing illegal activity. Additionally, there is no overlap in our commercial and recreational size limits and our GC season is extremely short only lasting 8 days in 2025.

   In states that have individual quotas, there is great incentive to sell striped bass in an illegal market and have no record of your individual quota utilization. Point of harvest (POH) tagging gives enforcement the opportunity to prevent this practice and is essential for states with individual quotas. RI does not have individual quotas.

   In Rhode Island, the only specific enforcement concerns that POH tagging could help to address is striped bass legally harvested by licensed commercial fishers being sold on the black-market and/or not being reported. However, the RIDEM Division of Law Enforcement believes that this is not a significant issue and very few fish are meeting this outcome.

   Most fish being sold at an illegal market are from non-commercial recreational fishers and POH tagging would do little to aid in the enforcement of this issue and could exacerbate it. Recreational fishers would not be allowed to take a commercial-sized striped bass (there is no overlap in sizes like tautog) whether the fish were tagged at POH or not. The same enforcement efforts and actions are going to take place to combat illegal sales of recreational striped bass if there is POH or POS tagging.

New York

Overview of Striped Bass Commercial Tagging Program

A. Striped Bass Commercial Fishery Overview

1. **Type of Management (e.g., ITQ, limited entry, etc.):**

Limited entry permit system with non-transferable individual fishing quotas (through tag allotments).

Commercial Striped Bass Harvester Permits (CSBHP) are an "endorsement" on the New York Food Fishing License (FFL). In order to have a CSBHP, you must have a FFL. Permits may only be transferred to immediate family members (as defined by NY law), or in the event of a death of a permit holder, a one-time transfer to non-family members is permitted.

Each CSBHP holder is assigned either a "full" or "part" share of tags. This is determined based on percent of income that comes from commercial fishing activity.

2. **Point of Tagging (harvest and/or sale):** Harvest

3. **Number of Participants Receiving Commercial Tags**

   If a state has gear-specific tags, it is optional to list participants by gear type. At a minimum, please provide some insight into the prevalence of different gears in question #4.

   Maryland and Virginia please separate Ocean vs. Chesapeake Bay.

	# Participants Receiving Tags
2020	407/*
2021	410/392
2022	394/376
2023	396/382
2024	392/379

New York does not issue tags based on gear type. Each CSBHP holder who is in good standing with the department and has renewed on time is eligible to order tags. Not all permit holders buy tags.

The table lists out the "number of participants eligible to purchase tags"/ "number of participants who actually purchased tags".

**Don't have the second metric easily accessible for 2020 due to a database change.*

4. **Gears Used (please indicate which are most common):**

"Striped bass may be taken for commercial purposes by the following gear types only: hook and line, pound net, trap net, gill net with mesh size of 6.00 to 8.00 inch stretched mesh, or as by-catch in otter trawls. It is unlawful to use gill nets to take striped bass, or to possess striped bass while tending any gill net in Great South Bay, South Oyster Bay, or Hempstead Bay. Otter trawl by-catch is limited to 21 striped bass per vessel per trip and must be boxed separately. Gill nets with mesh sizes less than 6.00 inches, or greater than 8.00 inches, are limited to a by-catch of 7 striped bass per trip and must also be boxed separately. All other types of gear are prohibited for the use in taking striped bass, including, but not limited to, haul seines and spears."

The average percentage of landing by gear from 2020-2024 is as follows:
Gillnet (64%), Hook and Line/Hand Line (24%), Trawl (6%), and Fixed Nets (5%).

5. **2024 Commercial Measures:**

Gear	Size Limit	Trip Limit	Quota	Open Seasons
*	Not less than 26" TL nor greater than 38" TL	By tag allocation	595,686	May 15-December 15

** Striped bass may be taken for commercial purposes by the following gear types only: hook and line, pound net, trap net, gill net with mesh size of 6.00 to 8.00 inch stretched mesh, or as by-catch in otter trawls.*

6. ***Optional:*** **Provide any additional information about the commercial fishery the state would like to explain.**

B. Biological Metric, Number of Tags, and Program Operation

1. **Describe the biological metric used to determine the number of tags printed and issued to participants:**

The biological metric used for determining the number of tags is the average weight of fish which comes from NY's fisheries dependent sampling program. Commercially caught fish from markets are weighed, total length is measured, and scales are collected for ageing.

Only data from NY caught/tagged fish is collected. Length and age frequencies of these fish are also used to inform the predicted weight for the next year when calculating tag numbers.

In addition to the biological metrics, the following factors are considered when calculating the total number of tags issued: the number of permit holders who have renewed, current split between full and part share permit holders, and the amount of tags that went unused and were returned to the department.

Example of how tags are calculated yearly:

Table 3. 2025 Striped Bass Tag Distribution Calculation	
Quota (lbs)	580307
av weight (lbs) per fish market sampling	11.3
2024 comm permits issued	394
# full shares 2024*	316
# part shares 2024*	78
# tags (quota/avg lb per fish)	51354.60177
# tags+ 8% returns (based on 2024 returns)	**55462**.96991
# tags/394 permit holders	140.7689592
part share allocation (20% of 140)	**28**.15379183
part share total tags	**2195**.995763
full share total tags (total tags- part share tags)	**53266**.97415
full share allocation	**168**.5663739

2. **Number of Tags Issued and Tags Not Accounted For:**

	# Tags Issued	Percent of Tags Not Accounted For*
2020	62430	^
2021	67991	1.6%
2022	61000	1%
2023	61601	0%
2024	59502	0.5%

**Tags not accounted for refers to unused tags that were not returned/not reported as lost.*

^don't have the 2020 unaccounted for tags easily accessible due to data base change

3. **What is the process and timing for tag distribution? E.g., tags distributed by mail during the month of November before the fishery opens on January 1.**

NYSDEC provides Cambridge Security Seals with the list of permit holders and the serial numbers they are assigned. Permit holders purchase their tags directly from Cambridge Security Seals. Cambridge Security Seals has requested an 8-10 week lead time for production, so tag numbers and permit information is sent to the company in late February in order for tags to be in hand by the May 15th start date.

Since DEC does not directly distribute tags to the fishermen, once permit holders receive their tags they must sign and return an "Acknowledgement of Receipt of Tags" form that attests to them receiving the correct number of tags and the correct serial numbers.

4. **Are tags allowed to be transferred between individuals? If so, how are transfers monitored?**

Tags are currently not allowed to be transferred between individuals in New York and the tag holder MUST be present if the tags are being filled. New York's Marine Resource Advisory Council (MRAC) and DEC are considering amending regulations to allow tag transfer between commercial striped bass harvester permit holders in the future.

5. **Does the state require data about the use of each tag to be reported back to the state? This could include sale date, poundage of each fish tagged, etc.**

Commercial fishers must submit vessel trip reports (VTR) for each commercial fishing trip that is taken. VTRs must have the pounds of striped bass landed and the number of tags used. It is not required by regulation that the serial numbers of tags are recorded on VTRs, but it is encouraged.

Additional information collected on the VTRS include:

Harvester Reporting:

Vessel Name
State Reg or Vessel Doc #
Permit Type and Number
Date/Time Sailed
# of Crew
# of Anglers
Gear Fished
Mesh/Ring Size
Quantity of Gear
Size of Gear
# of Haul
Average Tow/Soak Time
NMFS Statistical Area Fished
LAT/LONG or Loran of Area Fished
Average Depth
Species Fished
Pounds of each Species Kept/Discarded
Dealer Permit # or Sales Disposition
Dealer Name
Date Sold
Port and State Landed
Date/Time Landed

6. **Describe the process for returning and auditing unused tags.**

Unused tags must be returned to the department by December 20 (or 5 days after the close of the commercial season). Tags may be returned in person or by mail. Returned tags are counted by staff and serial numbers are checked. Any permit holder who has two or more tags unaccounted for are notified by mail of their discrepancy. Mailings continue until the discrepancy is resolved. If the permit holder is unable to account for the tags, a signed letter stating that tags are lost is required and held in their file.

7. **Describe how the state responds to non-compliance with commercial tagging or reporting requirements (e.g., failure to return unused tags, submit mandatory reports, etc.)?**

Permit holders are NOT eligible to receive tags for the current year if they have not resolved reporting and tag compliance issues from the previous year or if they have missed the Commercial Striped Bass Harvester Permit renewal deadline. According to regulation, DEC can deduct the number of tags issued to a fisher if they have not accounted for all the previous year; however, this has not been done since at least 2020, if not earlier.

C. Program Changes and Challenges

1. **Identify any major changes and challenges with the commercial tagging program over the past ten years. Feel free to use the following categories to organize various issues or modify/add categories as needed.**

Tag Procurement/Distribution:

- Starting in 2015 and due to staffing and logistical constraints at DEC, the department switched from distributing tags in house to having permit holders order tags directly from Cambridge Security Seals.

- The 2022 season saw delays in permit holders receiving their tags in time for NY's May 15 opening date, due to production issues with the tag vendor. This issue caused significant economic impact to fishermen who did not have their tags on opening day. For the 2023 commercial fishing season, the tag vendor increased production lead time for tags from 4 weeks in 2022 to 8-10 weeks. To avoid a delay in 2023 and to accommodate the new production lead time, New York distributed tag order material earlier than the past (late February) to give permit holders ample time to purchase tags before the start of the commercial fishing season and to ensure equitable opportunity for commercial harvesters. DEC has maintained this earlier timeline since 2023 but this has resulted in needing to estimate the number of used/unused tags for the previous fishing year, as well as the number of permit renewals for the current year.

- New York's regulations (prior to March 7, 2023) stated a $0.25 price cap on commercial tags. This price cap had become an issue for NY's tag vendor, as they had not had a price increase in many years. To address this issue and to maintain a functioning commercial tagging program, New York filed an emergency rule making in 2023 to remove the $0.25 price cap. This measure allows for flexibility in the future and avoid subsequent regulatory changes in order to work with tag manufacturers.

- Cambridge Security Seals has had QA/QC issues resulting in permit holders receiving the wrong number of tags or set of serial numbers. Although this has happened consistently the last several years, it appears to be a small percentage of orders based on what has been reported to the department by the permit holders.

Tag Accounting/Return of Unused Tags:

- There have not been any major issues with tag accounting or return of unused tags over the past ten years.

- Staffing and departmental changes, as well as the development of new commercial fisheries databases since 2018, have caused some minor inconsistencies when calculating final numbers year-to-year, but overall the transition has been smooth and percentage of "unaccounted for" tags remains low.

- Tag deductions are a mechanism the department can use to help with tag accounting and compliance, but since at least 2020 tags this has not been utilized. This first began because of administrative and logistical issues related to COVID and has yet to be reestablished as part of the program.

Enforcement:

- Within the last ten years, Law Enforcement requested that the permit numbers be printed on the commercial tag. Law Enforcement has found this effective.

Other:

- In 2024, NY went over commercial harvest by ~15k pounds. This is likely due to both fish availability (2015 and 2018 year class in the slot) and also heavier fish. Additionally, in 2024 DEC was less conservative with their "unused tag rate" buffer . This was driven by a requests by the Marine Resources Advisory Council and their concern with consistent underharvest of commercial quota in NY prior to 2024.

From 2024 Tagging Report:
"In previous years, including 2023, tag determinations were based on an observed trend in the fishery which showed an 8% return rate of tags. This 8% has been used as a buffer to increase finalized tag allocations. The quota utilization rate has been increasing in recent years, but still falls short of full utilization. For 2024, we are using an 11% tag

return rate/buffer for our tag allotment calculations. This percentage was selected in consideration of the 4,000 unaccounted for 2023 tags (as of January 2024 when the allotments were calculated) and with the assumption that half of the tags will be returned, and half will be used. While this is a slightly less conservative approach, the tag utilization trends, the size and numbers of available fish projected to fall in the 26-38" slot size, and the consistent underharvest from the commercial fishery provides confidence that we will not overharvest during the 2024 season. Additionally, to safeguard against overharvest, our regulations allow us to close the fishery if the harvest is projected to be over quota, despite issuance of tags to all permit holders."

2. **For states who tag at the point of sale: Since Draft Addendum III includes an option to require tagging at point or harvest, identify any major challenges the state's commercial tagging program may encounter by transitioning to point of harvest.**

The Addendum III option that may require point of harvest tagging will not affect New York as point of harvest tagging is already required in New York.

D. Program Successes

1. **Identify how challenges are being addressed/resolved and any other major successes the state would like highlight from the past ten years.**

Tag Procurement/Distribution:

- To eliminate the need to estimate the number of permit renewals each year, DEC is proposing a regulatory change to amend the permit renewal deadline from April 15 to February 15. This will provide more precise metrics for calculating tag allotments.

Tag Accounting/Return of Unused Tags:

- DEC commercial data management staff continually work on ways to improve data entry methods to have more timely and precise tag accounting.

- DEC staff is developing a protocol to begin docking tags in a standardized way, including keeping detailed records of permit holders who are late on reporting or who consistently lose tags.

- DEC is exploring switching tag distribution back to in house rather than directly from the tag company. This will allow for greater oversite over the tags, reduce QA/QC concerns from the tag company, and make it easier to reinstate the tag docking protocol.

Other:

- Quota was reduced in 2025 to account for the 2024 overage

- For 2025 tag calculations, the "unused tag rate" buffer was returned to 8% (down from 11% in 2024) since quota was more fully utilized than past years. This reflected what was seen in the fishery.

- Besides 2024, NY has generally harvested under quota, indicating the yearly tag allotment calculation system has been successful.

2. **Would the state deem its current tagging program as a success in minimizing illegal harvest? Are there ongoing sources of illegal commercial harvest?**

According to NYSDEC and Law Enforcement staff:

"We are happy with our current tags and point of harvest tagging as a deterrent of illegal sales. I agree, the change of having the permit number on the tag to make sure the tags are being used by the actual holder has had an impact on the illegal sharing of tags. We are never going to be able to stop all illegal harvest and sales, but the system does have a significant impact."

"It minimizes illegal harvest. There is likely poaching and illegal commercialization … hear most often anecdotal comments about restaurant sales."

DELAWARE

Overview of Striped Bass Commercial Tagging Program

A. Striped Bass Commercial Fishery Overview

1. **Type of Management (e.g., ITQ, limited entry, etc.):** ITQ, limited entry

2. **Point of Tagging (harvest and/or sale):** Point of tagging was changed by the legislature from harvest to "before landing or putting on shore" in 2015.

3. **Number of Participants Receiving Commercial Tags**

   If a state has gear-specific tags, it is optional to list participants by gear type. At a minimum, please provide some insight into the prevalence of different gears in question #4.

   Maryland and Virginia please separate Ocean vs. Chesapeake Bay.

	# Receiving Tags				# Receiving Tags		
	GN	**HL**	**Total**		**GN**	**HL**	**Total**
2016	111	122	233	**2021**	111	141	252
2017	111	131	242	**2022**	111	133	244
2018	111	150	261	**2023**	111	130	241
2019	111	138	249	**2024**	111	130	241
2020	111	128	239	**2025**	111	126	237

4. **Gears Used (please indicate which are most common):** Three types of gear are used to harvest Delaware's commercial quota. The primary gear is anchored gill net. Three to five licensees fish only drift net annually. Lastly, hook and line harvest is responsible for less than 1% of the annual total quota.

5. **2024 Commercial Measures:**

Gear	Size Limit	Trip Limit	Quota (lbs)	Open Seasons
Anchor Gill Net	≥20"	None	Per license 1134, Total 125,876	Feb 15 - April 27*
Drift Gill Net	≥20"	None	Per license 1134, Total 125,877	Feb 15 - May 31*
Hook and Line	≥28"	None	Per licence 51, Total 6,625	April 1 - Dec 31

*if <98% of quota is caught during spring season, then DE opens a fall GN season beginning November 15 with a min size of 28"

6. ***Optional:*** **Provide any additional information about the commercial fishery the state would like to explain.**
   Although Delaware issues 111 commercial Striped Bass gill net licenses annually, only 35 to 40 are fished annually due to ITQ. Transfers must occur prior to the season start date which reduces the number of fishers whose tags Delaware has to track. Delaware also incorporates weigh stations which serve as a second point of harvest verification. Weigh stations are responsible for attaching a second tag to each fish and call in each licensed fisher's catch daily. Tag color for both fisher and weigh station tags changes on a rotating basis every year.

B. Biological Metric, Number of Tags, and Program Operation

1. **Describe the biological metric used to determine the number of tags printed and issued to participants:**
   DDFW uses metrics such as average weight from previous years' landings and estimated year class strength of striped bass recruiting to the commercial gear to inform the decisions on the number of tags needed for the upcoming season. However, these biometrics do not describe the future year's tag needs completely. Due to the manner in which tags are administered by DDFW licensing, an overage must be built in to provide for multiple weigh stations and all 111 licensees receiving the same amount of tags initially, regardless of fishing effort, latency, or transfers. Furthermore, while the spring gill net fishery targets larger (>26") striped bass that can be sold in NY, the size limit for this fishery is 20" and the fishery will target smaller fish under certain conditions, so the number of tags ordered must also account for that situation.

2. **Number of Tags Issued and Tags Not Accounted For:**

	# Tags Issued GN	# Tags Issued HL	Percent of Tags Not Accounted For*
2020	16,650	896	<1
2021	16,650	846	<1
2022	16,650	931	<1
2023	16,650	650	<1
2024	16,650	650	0

**Tags not accounted for refers to unused tags that were not returned/not reported as lost.*

3. **What is the process and timing for tag distribution?**

   Tags are ordered in November so they are available for distribution to fishers February 1st of each year for the February 15th start date.

4. **Are tags allowed to be transferred between individuals? If so, how are transfers monitored?**

   Tags can be transferred between individuals but such transfers must be done prior to the start of the season. Each quota is allocated 150 tags with unique numbering. When a quota is transferred, tags with specific numbers assigned to that quota are given to the individual licensee in which the quota is transferred to.

5. **Does the state require data about the use of each tag to be reported back to the state? This could include sale date, poundage of each fish tagged, etc.**

   Cumulative weight and number of fish is reported for each licensed individual via an IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system daily and again via monthly fisher reports. Catch date, license number, cumulative weight and number of fish are reporting elements.

6. **Describe the process for returning and auditing unused tags.**

   Fishers return tags to the Division when their quota is filled. The number of tags returned is checked against IVR reports and harvest logs.

7. **Describe how the state responds to non-compliance with commercial tagging or reporting requirements (e.g., failure to return unused tags, submit mandatory reports, etc.)?**
   Unused tags, including broken tags, are required to be turned into the Division along with a Daily Striped Bass Catch Report by June 30th of the year. Non-compliant individuals are not issued quota for the following year.

C. Program Changes and Challenges

1. **Identify any major changes and challenges with the commercial tagging program over the past ten years. Feel free to use the following categories to organize various issues or modify/add categories as needed.**

   Tag Procurement/Distribution:

Product quality went down and price went up using former vendor. A new vendor is now used, resulting in a more reliable product at a lower cost. Fisher tags have a tensile strength of roughly 110 lbs while weigh station tags are not nearly as strong. Price of tags will increase with quality and strength of tag type. Weigh station tags are much cheaper as they do not have the strength of fisher tags.

Tag Accounting/Return of Unused Tags:

Fishers are required to turn in any unused tags after the season. This includes the small proportion (<1%) of broken or defective tags. Over the years, the Division has had very few instances of tag loss – blown overboard, out of vehicles, etc. but these losses have been called in immediately by the fisher.

Enforcement:
Enforcement officers routinely check fishers at landing sites and weigh stations. On the water inspections have occurred but are not common.

Other:

2. **For states who tag at the point of sale: Since Draft Addendum III includes an option to require tagging at point or harvest, identify any major challenges the state's commercial tagging program may encounter by transitioning to point of harvest.**

D. Program Successes

1. **Identify how challenges are being addressed/resolved and any other major successes the state would like highlight from the past ten years.**

   Weigh stations present a conflict of interest in some cases. But having a weigh station is generally viewed as a privilege and the Division, in conjunction with enforcement, heavily scrutinizes weigh station applications and the number of weigh stations is capped.

2. **Would the state deem its current tagging program as a success in minimizing illegal harvest? Are there ongoing sources of illegal commercial harvest?**

   Providing independent verification and generally doing more to abate illegal harvest, DE feels that any illegal activity has been minimized. It is DE's belief that multiple means of verification minimizes illegal activity.

MARYLAND
Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)
Overview of Striped Bass Commercial Tagging Program

A. Striped Bass Commercial Fishery Overview

1. Type of Management (e.g., ITQ, limited entry, etc.):
   Maryland currently manages limited entry ITQ (Individual Transferable Quota) fishery. For many years there was a small limited entry derby fishery (Common Pool) being managed in parallel with the ITQ. However, the last year for Common Pool was 2024. In 2025 and forward, ITQ is the only option.

2. Point of Tagging (harvest and/or sale):
   "At harvest". Per Maryland's regulation, fish must be tagged (1) Immediately to a striped bass harvested by hook and line; (2) Within 200 yards of the pound net to a striped bass harvested from a pound net; or (3) Before removing a striped bass from a boat or removing a boat from the water, to a striped bass harvested by any other gear.

3. Number of Participants Receiving Commercial Tags
   If a state has gear-specific tags, it is optional to list participants by gear type. At a minimum, please provide some insight into the prevalence of different gears in question #4.
   Maryland and Virginia please separate Ocean vs. Chesapeake Bay.

	# Coastal Participants Receiving Tags Initially at the Beginning of the Season	**# Bay Participants Receiving Tags Initially at the Beginning of the Season**
2020	45	802
2021	44	786
2022	45	777
2023	44	746
2024	47	758

*Number of participants changes throughout the year based on transfers of permits/share/allocation, and tags. "# of Participants Receiving Tags" in the table above are the amount of people issued tags at the beginning of each season.
*The maximum number of permits available to the fishery is 1,231. A commercially licensed harvester must also have a permit in order to fish for striped bass.

4. Gears Used (please indicate which are most common):

Gill Net (Drift and Anchored, anchored only allowed in Ocean)
Hook -n- Line (Bay only)
Pound Net (Bay only)
Haul Seine (Bay only)
Otter and Beam Trawl (Ocean only)
Pound net and gill net are used more commonly in the Bay Fishery. Gill net is most commonly used in the coastal fishery.

5. 2024 Commercial Measures:

Gear/Region	Size Limit	Trip Limit	2024 ASMFC Quota	Open Seasons
Chesapeake Bay: pound net	18-36" TL	none for ITQ	1,344,217 pounds*	June 1-Dec 31
Chesapeake Bay: haul seine	18-36" TL	none for ITQ		Jan1-Feb 29, June 1-Dec 31
Chesapeake Bay: hook and line	18-36" TL	none for ITQ; common pool 250 lbs/permittee/week		June 1-Dec 31; common pool- 2 days out of the month only
Chesapeake Bay: gill net	18-36" TL	none for ITQ; common pool 300 lbs/permittee/week		Jan1-Feb 29, Dec 1-31; common pool- 2-3 days out of the month only
Atlantic Ocean: gill net and trawl	24" TL min	none	82,857 pounds**	Jan 1-May 31, Oct 1-Dec 31

*The 2024 Chesapeake Bay quota of 1,445,394 pounds was already allocated to permit holders prior to when Addendum II reductions were made. Any overage will be subtracted from the 2026 quota.
**The 2024 Chesapeake Bay quota of 89,094 pounds was already allocated to permit holders prior to when Addendum II reductions were made. Any overage will be subtracted from the 2025 quota.
***Common Pool openings/limits dependant on available quota each month. Common Pool is no longer an option in 2025 and forward.

6. *Optional:* Provide any additional information about the commercial fishery the state would like to explain.

B. Biological Metric, Number of Tags, and Program Operation

1. Describe the biological metric used to determine the number of tags printed and issued to participants:

Average fish weight by fishery location and gear type. DNR's field biologists sample fish at check stations to determine this.

2. Number of Tags Issued and Tags Not Accounted For:

	# Tags Issued	Percent of Tags Not Accounted For*
2020	500,320	9.8%**
2021	525,000	17.9%**
2022	442,850	3.8%
2023	441,600	6.5%
2024	441,000	5.9% (Preliminary)

**Tags not accounted for refers to unused tags that were not returned/not reported as lost.*

***Tag return began at the start of 2020, however, when the COVID pandemic started in mid-March, the process of tag return was halted. There was a two-year tag return process in 2022 of which permittees were asked to return unused tags from both 2020 and 2021. Information from the industry to MDNR reported discarding tags thinking the tag return process would not occur given the continuing pandemic.*

3. What is the process and timing for tag distribution? E.g., tags distributed by mail during the month of November before the fishery opens on January 1.
From July 1 to July 14, staff calculate what each permittee is required to pay for tags. This is done using each permittee share percentage, a guesstimate on the upcoming years quota, and a guesstimate on the per tag cost.

DNR's license renewal and permit declaration period runs from July 15 to September 15. At this time permittees pay for their tags.

After the quota is officially set, staff then determine how many tags each permittee requires in mid October to mid November. Using DNR biologist data on weight per fish per fishery and gear, this is divided into each permittees allocation pounds to determine the number of tags required.

In late November to early December, staff provide the vendor with a list of permittee, their mailing address, and then number of tags required for each permittee. The vendor produces the tags and ships them to the permittee via certified mail. The return address

on the shipments is DNR's address so that staff are aware of undeliverable tags. The vendor supplies DNR with the unique tag numbers for each permittee.

4. Are tags allowed to be transferred between individuals? If so, how are transfers monitored?
   Yes, tags are able to be transferred between permit holders. Permit holders are required to fill out this form and submit it to MDNR.
   https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/documents/2025_Tag_Transfer_Form.pdf
   Permittees are required to fill out the tag sequence numbers being transferred and the total number of tags being transferred. Permittees also provide a total number of fish harvested at the time of requesting a transfer.

5. Does the state require data about the use of each tag to be reported back to the state? This could include sale date, poundage of each fish tagged, etc.
   No. MDNR biologists will sample striped bass at check in stations to obtain data on pound per fish, etc…
   Permittees and Check Stations are only required to provide total poundage and total number of fish per day on the permit holders permit card.

   Permittee are also required to send in either monthly paper harvest reports, daily electronic harvest reports, or use SAFIS to report. The fish are required to be weighed and counted at check stations. Check stations are required to either send in weekly paper reports or daily electronic reports.

6. Describe the process for returning and auditing unused tags.
   Permit holders are notified of tag return bins placed around the state. These bins are placed at locations such as Natural Resource Police field offices, MDNR fisheries field offices, major landing locations, etc… The unused tags are required to be dropped off in these bins by March 31 along with a signed Tag Return Affidavit. DNR staff collect the tags multiple times at each location during the tag return period. These unused tags are then returned to MDNR's office, identified to the assigned permit holder, and counted.

   If tags are lost by the permit holder, thus unable to be returned to MDNR, an incident report must be submitted to Maryland's Natural Resource Police. This report is sent to MDNR's permitting staff.

7. Describe how the state responds to non-compliance with commercial tagging or reporting requirements (e.g., failure to return unused tags, submit mandatory reports, etc.)?
   Maryland Natural Resources Police would handle enforcement of non-compliance in their normal course of business. There are fines and administrative penalties (i.e., license suspension or revocation) that are tied to different types of violations. The Fine and Bond Schedule is available here, which lays out the fines that would be administered by the Maryland District Court, and the commercial penalty schedule is available here. Any striped bass violation that leads to at least 10 points results in the suspension of the licensee for the next practicable quota year in the striped bass fishery. Any violation or set of violations that result in an individual having 35 points or more on their license would lead to revocation from Maryland's commercial fisheries.

C. Program Changes and Challenges

1. Identify any major changes and challenges with the commercial tagging program over the past ten years. Feel free to use the following categories to organize various issues or modify/add categories as needed.

   Tag Procurement/Distribution:
   The time between ASMFC setting the annual quota and tag distribution can be short some years. Furthermore, the vendor producing the tags is requiring more time in order to complete orders before mid-December.

   Tag Accounting/Return of Unused Tags:
   This is very time consuming for staff.

   Enforcement:
   Maryland would expect that the Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) would have accurate input on enforcing our tag program and will defer this question to them.

   Other:
   Considering the vendor produces tags in bags of 100, there can be quite a lot of unused tags leftover at the end of the harvest year. This can seem wasteful to some in the industry. On average, 20% of the tags are returned unused.

   MDNR's license season runs from September 1 to August 31. This is different from ASMFC striped bass harvest season (January 1 to December 31). When permit holders are renewing their licenses and permits, they are required to pay for tags at

this same time. The differences between ASMFC harvest season and MDNR's license season requires MDNR to guesstimate the upcoming quota to determine what each permit holder is required to pay for tags (based on their percent share) during the pre-season declaration window.

The license year/calendar year issue as described above also means that there are often concerns about getting tags to individuals on time. In Maryland, this is a huge concern because commercial harvest opens starting on January 1 when the market is often at its highest. In addition, because permittees are using last year's tags up until December 31 and then the present year starting on January 1, this means permittees need to be very careful to grab the tags with the right year starting on January 1.

Tags are increasing in cost.

The Tag Compliance report is due prior to when MDNR has not completed collecting and processing unused tags. If the report deadline could be extended to mid-summer this would make all the information available within the report.

2. For states who tag at the point of sale: Since Draft Addendum III includes an option to require tagging at point or harvest, identify any major challenges the state's commercial tagging program may encounter by transitioning to point of harvest.
   N/A

D. Program Successes

1. Identify how challenges are being addressed/resolved and any other major successes the state would like to highlight from the past ten years.
   The current challenges of the tagging program are mostly related to the timing of quota decisions made by the Board and staff resources used to collect and record all of the unused tags. In order for Maryland to address these challenges, MDNR would need changes to the 'quota year' and the requirements to collect all unused tags and account for them to the specific individual. While this would help MDNR, it is understood how this concept could be difficult for other states and it would ultimately reduce individual accountability which isn't something desired.

2. Would the state deem its current tagging program as a success in minimizing illegal harvest? Are there ongoing sources of illegal commercial harvest?

The current tagging program is a success when compared to the program operating during the derby fishery (pre-2015). MDNR staff are not aware of any ongoing sources of illegal harvest related to the tagging program. Similar to the question above about enforcement, LEC feedback should be sought out to provide details on current/ongoing illegal harvest related to tagging.

Potomac River Fisheries Commission

Overview of Striped Bass Commercial Tagging Program

A. Striped Bass Commercial Fishery Overview

1. Type of Management (e.g., ITQ, limited entry, etc.):

The Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC) manages the striped bass tagging program by limiting entry for various gear types. The gear types include gill net, pound net, hook and line, fyke net and haul seine.

2. Point of Tagging (harvest and/or sale):

Point of harvest – striped bass tags must be applied as soon as feasible and in no event shall any commercially caught striped bass be removed from the Potomac River or from the boat at the point of landing, whichever occurs first, without said tag being permanently affixed. The words "as soon as feasible" mean for the i) Commercial Hook & Line fishery – as soon as the fish is taken and before it is put into the cooler or storage area; ii) Pound Net fishery – as soon as the fish are taken and before the boat leaves the net site; and iii) Gill Net fishery – as soon as each separate piece of net is fished and before the boat leaves the net site.

3. Number of Participants Receiving Commercial Tags

If a state has gear-specific tags, it is optional to list participants by gear type. At a minimum, please provide some insight into the prevalence of different gears in question #4.
Maryland and Virginia please separate Ocean vs. Chesapeake Bay.

	# Participants Receiving Tags
2020	267
2021	265
2022	265
2023	258
2024	263

4. Gears Used (please indicate which are most common):

Gear types: **gill net, pound net, hook and line**, fyke net and haul seine. **Bolded are most common.**

5. **2024 Commercial Measures:**

Gear	Size Limit	Trip Limit	Quota	Open Seasons
Hook & Line	Jan. 1 – Feb. 14: 18.0" min. Feb. 15 - Mar. 25: 18.0"- 36.0" slot Jun. 1 – Dec. 31: 18.0" min.	NA	76,222 lbs.	Jan. 1 – Mar. 25, 2024 Jun. 1 – Dec. 31, 2024
Pound Net	Feb. 15 - Mar. 25: 18.0"- 36.0" slot Jun. 1 – Dec. 31: 18.0" min.	NA	118,806 lbs.	Feb. 15 - Mar. 25, 2024 Jun. 1 - Dec. 15, 2024
Misc. Gear (Haul Siene & Fyke Net)	Feb. 15 - Mar. 25: 18.0"- 36.0" slot Jun. 1 – Dec. 31: 18.0" min.	NA	12,786 lbs.	Feb. 15 - Mar. 25, 2024 Jun. 1 - Dec. 15, 2024
Gill Net	Nov. 7 - Dec. 31, 18.0" min Jan. 1 - Feb. 14, 18.0" min Feb. 15 - Mar. 25, 18.0" - 36.0" slot	NA	349,405 lbs. *	Nov. 6 - Dec. 31, **2023** Jan. 1 – March 25, **2024**

* Gill net quota does not reflect the 7% reduction in 2024 due to the season ending March 25, 2024. The 7% reduction is reflected in the next gill net season (2024-2025).

6. ***Optional:*** **Provide any additional information about the commercial fishery the state would like to explain.**

Since 2008, the PRFC has managed the gill net fishery on a split year season to improve the procedure for issuing tags for the gear. For example, the 2024 quota year's gill net season began on November 6, 2023 and ended March 25, 2024. Prior to the split year season, the procedure was extremely cumbersome and required significant staff time during the busiest time of the year for the PRFC office. To better serve the stakeholders and improve the efficiency of the tagging program, the PRFC shifted to a split year season which allowed for a shift of the gill net tag issuance to occur in November ahead of the license renewal period for the other gear types and for gill net tag reconciliation to occur in April once the license renewal period has ended.

B. Biological Metric, Number of Tags, and Program Operation

1. **Describe the biological metric used to determine the number of tags printed and issued to participants:**

The PRFC uses the average weight of a fish by gear type for the last full year of data to calculate how many tags should be issued to each license/licensee for the next season. Pound

net, hook and line, fyke net and haul seine can harvest for most of the year which requires PRFC to use the average weight of fish from the 2023 season to allocate tags for the 2025 season. Gill net is only a 5-month season thus the reporting for this gear is near-final by the time the next season begins so the 2023-2024 season's average weight of fish can be used to calculate the allocation for the 2024-2025 season.

The PRFC submits orders for next year's tag shipment in July and are typically received by the Commission in October. The tags are then organized and checked for quality control prior to issuing to harvesters. The following formula is used to calculate the number of tags ordered and allocated to each harvester by gear type.

The PRFC commercial striped bass quota for 2025 is 532,761 pounds. The gill net, pound net and hook & line fisheries are limited entry and are allocated tags per license. Note one person may hold multiple of one or more types of these licenses. Miscellaneous gears such as fyke net and haul seine are allocated per qualified licensee. To be considered a qualified licensee, the harvester must have reported landing any fish species in the gear for at least three consecutive years before being eligible to harvest striped bass from that gear.

GN quota = 324,947 lbs. H&L quota = 76,222 lbs.

PN quota = 118,806 lbs. Misc. quota = 12,786 lbs.

		# of Tags Ordered	
GN:	324,947 lbs. / 7.3 (2023-2024 avg. weight of fish) = 44,513 tags	GN:	46,000
	44,513 tags / 710 GN licenses = 63 tags/license		
PN:	118,806 lbs. / 4.8 (2023 avg. weight of fish) = 24,751 tags	PN:	26,000
	24,751 tags / 100 PN licenses = 247 tags/license		
H&L:	76,222 lbs. / 4.9 (2023 avg. weight of fish) = 15,555 tags	H&L:	19,000
	15,555 tags / 205 H&L licenses = 75 tags/license		
Misc:	12,786 lbs. / 5.4 (2023 avg. weight of fish) = 2,367 tags	Misc:	4,000
	HS (60%) = 1,420 tags / 14 (# qualified licensees) = 100 tags		
	FN (40%) = 946 tags / 12 (# qualified licensees) = 78 tags		

Note: The PRFC orders approximately 1,500 additional tags for each gear to account for replacing any lost, broken, or defective tags. For the hook and line gear, the PRFC orders a larger buffer of ~3,500 tags due to a policy that allows a gill net license to be converted into a hook and line license during the renewal season. Historically this policy only converted 3-5 licenses annually, but for the 2024 and 2025 renewal periods over 45 licenses in total have been converted. This unexpected change in behavior in 2024 required the Commission to place an additional order in January 2024 to guarantee there were enough tags for this gear given the influx of participants. Since the trend from 2024 continued into the 2025 renewal period, the Commission now orders enough tags to accommodate an additional 30 licenses in the fishery.

2. **Number of Tags Issued and Tags Not Accounted For:**

	# Tags Issued	Percent of Tags Not Accounted For*
2020	80,718	0.43%
2021	81,370	0.19%
2022	83,616	0.24%
2023	79,368	0.39%
2024	87,713	0.53%

**Tags not accounted for refers to unused tags that were not returned/not reported as lost.*

3. **What is the process and timing for tag distribution? E.g., tags distributed by mail during the month of November before the fishery opens on January 1.**

All tags must be picked up in-person at the PRFC office by the harvester or a designee and sign that they have received the correct sequences of tags. For the gill net fishery, harvesters can pick up tags and renew their licenses beginning November 1st in preparation for the season to begin the second Monday in November. For pound net and fyke net, the nets must be set and verified by law enforcement prior to any tags being issued for these gears which is first legal beginning February 15th each year. For haul seine, the net must be verified and sealed by PRFC staff prior to tags being issued. For hook and line gear, tags can be issued at the time of license renewal beginning December 1st for the season to begin January 1st. For all gears, prior to issuing tags for the next season, all tags must be accounted for from the previous season. See question #6 for more details about the accounting process.

4. **Are tags allowed to be transferred between individuals? If so, how are transfers monitored?**

Tags are only allowed to be transferred between participants of the Hook and Line Exchange Program where hook and line licensees may opt-in to receive tags from those licensees who do not intend to fish either their whole or partial quota allocation. The licensee receiving tags must have reported use of 100% of their personal tag allocation, be up to date on harvest reporting, and have no fishing violations or tag accounting issues for the past three years to be able to receive any additional tags. All transfers of tags must be done in person at the PRFC office so that the sequencing of tags is accounted for properly in our database.

5. **Does the state require data about the use of each tag to be reported back to the state?** This could include sale date, poundage of each fish tagged, etc.

Harvesters are required to report trip level data including species, market grade category, gear, quantity of tags, total poundage, area fished, port of landing, and effort on their mandatory weekly harvest reports. PRFC does not collect any additional data on a per tag/fish basis.

6. **Describe the process for returning and auditing unused tags.**

Harvesters are encouraged to return any unused tags to the office once the season is over and prior to the start of the next fishing season. For example, the gill net season ends March 25th each year, so many harvesters return unused tags in April and May. For the other gears, most of the unused tags are returned to the Commission at the time of renewal for the next season. All returned tags are kept in office until July 1 of the following year to allow for auditing should a harvester note a discrepancy with their count compared to the database. After July 1, the returned tags and any unissued tags are disposed of at the local landfill.

Prior to issuing tags for the next season, harvester must account for all tags that were issued to them from the previous season. If there are any discrepancies, a one-for-one penalty is applied to next season's allocation. For example, if 20 tags remain unused for a harvester from the 2025 season and they have completed all their reporting for the season, 20 tags will be audited from their 2026 season allocation to reconcile for the unaccounted tags. If the harvester can supply the missing tags at any point throughout the 2026 season, PRFC staff will release tags equivalent to what was returned, up to the current year's allocation. If the harvester believes the number of unaccounted tags is a data error in the system, they can opt in to an official audit where PRFC staff validate all physical harvest reports against the database. If the records were entered correctly into the database, a $25 administrative fee is collected from the harvester and a one-for-one penalty is applied to the next season's allocation. If there were data entry errors on part of the PRFC staff, no fee is applied. If the submitted reports differ from what the harvester believes is accurate, they must provide proof via buyer/dealer tickets and their logbook to qualify to amend a report.

7. **Describe how the state responds to non-compliance with commercial tagging or reporting requirements (e.g., failure to return unused tags, submit mandatory reports, etc.)?**

Beyond the typical audit process occurring at license renewal, the PRFC may call to a hearing any harvesters who are delinquent in their harvest reporting for any species. The Commission may also call individuals who have outstanding remaining tag balances or if there is suspicious activity regarding the use of their tags. At the hearing, the Commission may revoke striped bass privileges, suspend licenses, place licensees on probationary periods, refuse to issue tags, and/or audit tags from future seasons depending on the severity of the case.

C. Program Changes and Challenges

1. **Identify any major changes and challenges with the commercial tagging program over the past ten years. Feel free to use the following categories to organize various issues or modify/add categories as needed.**

Tag Procurement/Distribution:

Manufacturer issues: Since the beginning of the striped bass tagging requirement, the PRFC used the vendor Tyden Brooks to produce the tags. In 2023, the company unexpectedly was unable to produce the order at a reasonable price due to having a new high volume order taking priority over routine annual orders. There was a very short deadline to find a replacement vendor but by reaching out to other states, a new supplier was found in time for the season to start. Since 2023, the Commission has purchased tags from Sierra Group LLC and have been satisfied with the quality and experience. It is also important to note that striped bass tags are purchased by the PRFC with funding from a five-year NOAA grant and no cost of the product is passed on to the harvester.

Tag Accounting/Return of Unused Tags:

The majority of tags are returned at the time of renewal for the next season's license. This is one of the busiest times for PRFC staff thus returned tags are not always able to be sequenced due to the volume staff receives during a short timeframe. Most often, PRFC staff only have time to count the quantity of tags returned and verify against the remaining tag balance. This can lead to some data entry errors that are difficult to research as the sorting of the returned tags is not an easy endeavor. To address this issue, the Commission is creating a return log that requires the harvester's signature to help cut down on the confusion of tag returns in the future.

Enforcement:

There are three jurisdictions that manage waters of the Potomac River and its tributaries: PRFC, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Virginia Marine Resources Commission. PRFC regulations are enforced jointly by the Maryland Natural Resources Police and the Virginia Marine Police. Since many of the harvesters hold licenses of the other state/jurisdictions, PRFC, MD, and VA each have regulations in place that prohibit a harvester from possessing another state/jurisdiction's striped bass tags while fishing in the respective area. This is largely one of the bigger enforcement issues in the Potomac River since the boundaries that define the territories, although physically demarcated, require more effort on the enforcement side to intercept in the right jurisdiction.

Timing of Commercial Quota Modifications:

Due to the split year gill net season, changes to commercial quota past October each year become extremely difficult for the PRFC to accommodate due to the current tag allocation procedure where the PRFC staff issues most tags in November. The gill net fishery is allocated 61% of the PRFC's total quota. Of all the gear types harvesting striped bass, the gill

net fishery utilizes the greatest proportion of their quota thereby placing the Commission in a position to potentially overharvest if commercial quotas are reduced by a significant amount. To try to combat this, when the ASMFC Striped Bass Board motioned to revise the 2025 commercial quota in October 2024, the PRFC had opted to withhold 5 tags from each gear type until after the Board's final decision in December 2024. Pre-emptively withholding tags due to the potential board action created great confusion with the stakeholders and required harvesters to return to the PRFC to retrieve the 5 withheld tags previously. If final decisions are made by the October Annual Meeting, the PRFC can act to reduce tag allocations within a few weeks.

2. **For states who tag at the point of sale: Since Draft Addendum III includes an option to require tagging at point or harvest, identify any major challenges the state's commercial tagging program may encounter by transitioning to point of harvest**.

Not applicable.

D. Program Successes

1. **Identify how challenges are being addressed/resolved and any other major successes the state would like highlight from the past ten years.**

Since the beginning of the program, the PRFC has worked to create a more efficient tagging program by using color-coded sequenced tags, switching to a split year gillnet season and exploring new vendors to reduce cost of materials. For other details about overcoming challenges, see the above section 'Program Challenges and Changes'.

2. **Would the state deem its current tagging program as a success in minimizing illegal harvest? Are there ongoing sources of illegal commercial harvest?**

Yes, the current tagging program is seen as a success in minimizing illegal harvest. The use of tamper-proof sequenced tags has allowed law enforcement to trace individual fish back to the harvester. Additionally, the use of different colored tags for each gear also aids law enforcement as a visual way to inspect harvester behavior from a distance. The tag auditing process has allowed the PRFC to hold each harvester accountable from year to year. The PRFC is not aware of any sources of illegal commercial harvest as related to the tagging program.

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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Secretary of Natural
and Historic Resources

Jamie L. Green
Commissioner

Virginia

Overview of Striped Bass Commercial Tagging Program

A. Striped Bass Commercial Fishery Overview

1. Type of Management (e.g., ITQ, limited entry, etc.):
   Limited Entry ITQ program. The only current way to enter the program is by purchasing or leasing quota (poundage) from another participant.

2. Point of Tagging (harvest and/or sale):
   Harvest

3. Number of Participants Receiving Commercial Tags

# of Participants Receiving Tags

	Chesapeake Bay Area	**Coastal Area**
2020	348	26
2021	342	26
2022	339	25
2023	339	25
2024	337	25

*These numbers are initial allocation for the season, does not include transfers. *

4. Gears Used (please indicate which are most common):

Most common gears are gill net and pound net. Virginia also has harvest from Hook & Line (rod and reel), fyke net and a small amount from fish pot. Anyone who holds Virginia Commercial striped bass quota can harvest striped bass from any gear they are licensed for.

5. 2024 Commercial Measures:

VIRGINIA CHESAPEAKE BAY FISHERY

GEAR	SIZE LIMIT	TRIP LIMIT	QUOTA	OPEN SEASON
ALL GEAR	18" MIN	NONE	983,393	JAN 16 THROUGH DEC 31
	MAX SIZE 28" FROM MARCH 15 THROUGH JUNE 15			

VIRGINIA COASTAL FISHERY

GEAR	SIZE LIMIT	TRIP LIMIT	QUOTA	OPEN SEASON
ALL GEAR	28" MIN	NONE	116,282	JAN 16 THROUGH DEC 31

6. *Optional:* Provide any additional information about the commercial fishery the state would like to explain.

B. Biological Metric, Number of Tags, and Program Operation

1. Describe the biological metric used to determine the number of tags printed and issued to participants:

   For the purposes of assigning tags to a person for commercial harvest in the Chesapeake Bay area and the coastal area, the individual commercial harvest quota of striped bass in pounds shall be converted to an estimate in numbers of fish. Using this average weight of striped bass harvested by the permitted person during the previous fishing year, the number of striped bass tags issued to each person will equal the estimated number of fish to be landed by that individual for the following year. Staff will then add 10% of the individual allotment for each person.

For any person whose reported average coastal area harvest weight of striped bass in the previous fishing year was less than 12 pounds, a 12-pound minimum weight shall be used to convert that person's harvest quota of striped bass, in pounds of fish, to harvest quota in number of fish.

Chapter 4 VAC 20-252, “Pertaining to Atlantic Striped Bass” Section 150 C,D,E

2. Number of Tags Issued and Tags Not Accounted For:

	# OF CHESAPEAKE TAGS ISSUED*	PERCENT OF BAY TAGS NOT ACCOUNTED FOR	# OF COASTAL TAGS ISSUED*	PERCENT OF COASTAL TAGS NOT ACCOUNTED FOR
2020	176,900	6.4	8,450	5.3
2021	184,250	2.7	7,650	4
2022	190,900	2.4	7,500	6.5
2023	191,250	3.4	7,300	0.84
2024	181,600	2	7,100	1.5

*This number does not include additional tags which were issued later in the season (upon request) to commercial striped bass quota owners who have not achieved their quota.

3. What is the process and timing for tag distribution?

- Tags are ordered from the manufacture July/August of the previous year.
- Tags are delivered early October.
- Tags are bagged up for each harvester by VMRC staff approx. mid November.
- Tags are distributed in the second week of January of the fishing year. Season opens January 16.

4. Are tags allowed to be transferred between individuals? If so, how are transfers monitored?

   Yes, tags are allowed to be transferred between harvesters/quota holders. When quota transfers take place, the participating individuals are required to bring any allocated tags to the office. Staff then reallocates the tags to go with the reallocation of quota. All transfers take place in front of VMRC staff, and a notarized form is required.

5. Does the state require data about the use of each tag to be reported back to the state?

   Yes, the VMRC requires that each harvester reports daily harvest, in pounds, of striped bass and number of tags used.

6. Describe the process for returning and auditing unused tags.

   - Each harvester/quota holder is required to turn in any unused tags within 30 days of harvesting their quota or by the second Thursday in January. Tags may be returned in person or by mail.
   - Harvesters are sent a letter in October of each year stating their current tag accounting for that year. At this time, they can contact VMRC if they have any discrepancies in their records before the fall season begins.
   - Harvester reports are audited using striped bass buyer reports. Any Virginia licensed buyer that wishes to purchase striped bass directly from a harvester must also get a Striped Bass Buyer Permit. One of the requirements for this permit is a monthly report that contains the ID number, date, pounds and number of tags purchased from each harvester.

7. Describe how the state responds to non-compliance with commercial tagging or reporting requirements.

   - Any unused tags that cannot be turned in to the commission shall be accounted for by the harvester submitting an affidavit to the commission that explains the disposition of the unused tags that are not able to be turned into the commission. Each person shall be required to pay a processing fee of $25, plus $0.13 per tag, for any unused tags that are not turned in to the commission.
   - Any harvester requesting a quota transfer or additional tags must be up to date on their mandatory harvest reports. If they are not, staff will deny the transfer until the reports are turned in.

C. Program Changes and Challenges

1. Identify any major changes and challenges with the commercial tagging program over the past ten years. Feel free to use the following categories to organize various issues or modify/add categories as needed.

   Tag Procurement/Distribution:
   - Over the past ten years the timeline for procurement has been challenging, longer processing and ship times have pushed the dates for ordering tags earlier in the past few years. Virginia has a bid process that allows companies with production overseas, transit times have been difficult. We have also seen a price increase.
   - Preparation of tags has been challenging especially over the past few years due to late Board decisions on commercial reductions.

   Tag Accounting/Return of Unused Tags:
   - This process has historically been difficult in Virginia due to the short time between the season closure and the next season opening. (closed Dec 31 and reopens Jan 16)
   - Difficulties arise due to our small staff and the number of harvesters. (Approx 400)
   - Month to month tag accounting has improved due to improved computer databases and online reporting.

   Enforcement:
   - VMRC operates on a harvester-based reporting system. Currently the only check and balance to this is monthly striped bass buyer reporting. Unfortunately, this does not capture the fish that are sold out of state or retail sales.
   - In Virginia, one challenge is the close jurisdictions of PRFC, Virginia and Maryland. Per Virginia regulation, harvesters cannot have other jurisdictions tags on board the vessel but this is an issue that Law enforcement runs into.

2. For states who tag at the point of sale: Since Draft Addendum III includes an option to require tagging at point or harvest, identify any major challenges the state's commercial tagging program may encounter by transitioning to point of harvest.

   N/A

D. Program Successes

1. Identify how challenges are being addressed/resolved and any other major successes the state would like highlight from the past ten years.
    - Better communication between VMRC fisheries staff and Law Enforcement in the field.
    - VMRC law enforcement has worked with federal partners over the past ten years to prosecute Lacey Act cases involving illegal Virginia harvested striped bass being sold over state lines into Maryland.

2. Would the state deem its current tagging program as a success in minimizing illegal harvest? Are there ongoing sources of illegal commercial harvest?

    Yes, Virginia's administrative tag accounting, regulations and Law enforcement work in the field all lends itself to a successful commercial striped bass program. Monthly online harvester reporting allows LE and staff a more real time view of what's occurring in the fishery.

    <u>Sources of illegal commercial harvest</u>
    - Commercial sale of untagged fish.
    - Incorrect reporting of weights, especially to out-of-state buyers.

[NORTH CAROLINA]

Overview of Striped Bass Commercial Tagging Program

A. Striped Bass Commercial Fishery Overview

1. Type of Management (e.g., ITQ, limited entry, etc.):

   Other than a cap on the maximum number of commercial licenses available in NC there are no limits to who can participate in any fishery if you have a NC Standard Commercial Fishing License (SCFL) or a Retired SCFL (RSCFL). For fiscal year 2024 there were 3,922 SCFLs and 1,354 Retired SCFLs licenses sold or issued. Of those licenses issued, 1,851 licenses were used to land seafood at a licensed seafood dealer.

2. Point of Tagging (harvest and/or sale):

   At the point of sale. Licensed seafood dealers must also obtain a free Striped Bass Dealer Permit each year in order to buy striped bass from a licensed SCFL or RSCFL holder.

3. Number of Participants (i.e. dealers) Receiving Commercial Tags

   If a state has gear-specific tags, it is optional to list participants by gear type. At a minimum, please provide some insight into the prevalence of different gears in question #4.
   Maryland and Virginia please separate Ocean vs. Chesapeake Bay.

   North Carolina issues striped bass commercial tags to the dealers to affix at the point of sale. NC does not have gear specific tags. No striped bass have been landed from the Atlantic Ocean since 2012, although dealers still get the free Striped Bass Dealer Permit just in case. NC no longer gives dealers striped bass tags for the Atlantic Ocean, although we buy them and have them on hand in the event striped bass are present in NC coastal waters 0-3 miles and we open the harvest season.

Year	Atlantic Ocean # Participants (dealers) Receiving Tags	ASMA # Participants (dealers) Receiving Tags
2000	25	43
2001	39	43
2002	38	37
2003	33	37
2004	51	27
2005	57	35
2006	34	37
2007	46	33
2008	40	34
2009	21	29

2010	19	32
2011	21	26
Year	Atlantic Ocean # Participants (dealers) Receiving Tags	ASMA # Participants (dealers) Receiving Tags
2012	4	22
2013	0	25
2014	0	31
2015	0	29
2016	0	30
2017	0	28
2018	0	28
2019	0	28
2020	0	27
2021	0	23
2022	0	18
2023	0	15
2024	0	0

4. Gears Used (please indicate which are most common):
   Atlantic Ocean: Gill net, beach seine, and trawl. When the fishery was still active the gill net gear had the most participants due to the inexpensive nature of constructing gill nets compared to the expense of trawls and the beach seine gear.

   ASMA: In 2023 gill nets accounted for 88%, pound nets 10%, and other gears 2% of the striped bass harvest.

5. 2024 Commercial Measures:
   NC did not open the Atlantic Ocean to the harvest of striped bass. If NC did, the measures that would have been implemented are below.

Atlantic Ocean

Gear	Size Limit	Trip Limit	Quota	Open Seasons
Beach seine	28” min	50 fish per day	91,603 lb	Was usually December
Gill net	28” min	10-20 fish per day	91,603 lb	Was usually January
Trawl	28” min	50-100 fish per day	91,603 lb	Was usually February

6. *Optional:* Provide any additional information about the commercial fishery the state would like to explain.
   None.

B. Biological Metric, Number of Tags, and Program Operation

1. Describe the biological metric used to determine the number of tags printed and issued to participants:
   Average pounds per fish harvested based off previous year divided by the quota. We order extra tags because we never know how many tags each individual dealer is going to use.

2. Number of Tags Issued and Tags Not Accounted For:

Fishing year	Fishery	Number of participants	Number of tags printed	Number of tags issued	Number of tags used	Number of tags returned	Number of tags missing
2023	Ocean	36	25,000	0	0	0	0
	ASMA	39	15,000	6,560	4,322	2,238	0
	CSMA	26	0	0	0	0	0
2022	Ocean	40	25,000	0	0	0	0
	ASMA	41	15,000	9,000	4,824	4,256	20
	CSMA	28	0	0	0	0	0
2021	Ocean	40	25,000	0	0	0	0
	ASMA	45	12,000	10,480	6,552	3,919	9
	CSMA	27	0	0	0	0	0
2020	Ocean	42	25,000	0	0	0	0
	ASMA	46	40,000	30,000	26,900	3,073	27
	CSMA	28	0	0	0	0	0
2019	Ocean	40	25,000	7,500	0	7,500	0
	ASMA	49	40,000	40,000	33,229	6,749	22
	CSMA	36	10,000	0	0	0	0
2018	Ocean	38	25,000	8,300	0	8,300	0
	ASMA	49	40,000	33,890	27,735	6,119	36
	CSMA	38	10,000	5,850	3,788	2,014	48
2017	Ocean	40	25,000	4,140	0	4,140	0
	ASMA	50	40,000	29,085	17,659	11,408	18
	CSMA	39	10,000	7,100	4,386	2,694	20
2016	Ocean	44	18,000	4,140	0	4,140	0
	ASMA	51	33,000	36,013	31,141	4,814	58
	CSMA	41	8,000	5,942	4,166	1,769	7

The two reasons for tags not getting returned are they broke and dealer threw them away or they were lost.

**Tags not accounted for refers to unused tags that were not returned/not reported as lost.*

3. What is the process and timing for tag distribution? E.g., tags distributed by mail during the month of November before the fishery opens on January 1.

Tags are delivered by hand directly to dealers by either Marine Patrol or Fisheries Management staff. Dealers are brought more tags if they need them throughout the year. We do not give a dealer all the tags they may use throughout the season all at one time.

4. Are tags allowed to be transferred between individuals? If so, how are transfers monitored?

   We normally order enough extra tags so we do not have to do that. When dealers receive tags, they have to sign documentation that lists the tag numbers that they were issued. Those data (tag numbers issued to each dealer) are maintained in a database.

5. Does the state require data about the use of each tag to be reported back to the state? This could include sale date, poundage of each fish tagged, etc.

   NC requires each dealer to report the number of tags used and the pounds landed on a daily basis throughout the harvest season.

6. Describe the process for returning and auditing unused tags.

   Once the harvest season concludes, DMF staff return to each dealer to collect any leftover tags. They then reconcile these retrieved tags with the initial delivery numbers and the number of tags used. In most years, there are minimal discrepancies.

7. Describe how the state responds to non-compliance with commercial tagging or reporting requirements (e.g., failure to return unused tags, submit mandatory reports, etc.)?

   Marine Patrol will issue citations for failing to report striped bass tags used and pounds landed on a daily basis. Dealers report each day for the previous day. Each Monday they report for tags used Fri-Sun.

C. Program Changes and Challenges

1. Identify any major changes and challenges with the commercial tagging program over the past ten years. Feel free to use the following categories to organize various issues or modify/add categories as needed.

   Tag Procurement/Distribution: None

   Tag Accounting/Return of Unused Tags: None

   Enforcement: None

Other: As striped bass have been absent from North Carolina's coastal ocean waters (0-3 miles) since 2012, we respectfully request that the next tag order for this species be produced without the year indicated. This would provide a cost saving measure by negating the need to purchase new tags each year when there are no landings. If landings occur, then for the following year we would either order tags with the year on it tags that were a different color from the previous year.

2. For states who tag at the point of sale: Since Draft Addendum III includes an option to require tagging at point or harvest, identify any major challenges the state's commercial tagging program may encounter by transitioning to point of harvest.

   Requiring striped bass to be tagged at the point of harvest would be a major challenge for NC, especially when the A-R stock recovers and harvest is reopened. NC currently does not have a way to limit the number of participants in a fishery. That action would require legislative approval and there would likely be considerable push back from the industry. Therefore, we would have to develop a tag dispersal and accounting system for SCFL and RSCFL holders that meets the commercial tagging requirements and uses staff time and resources efficiently.

D. Program Successes

1. Identify how challenges are being addressed/resolved and any other major successes the state would like highlight from the past ten years.

   None.

2. Would the state deem its current tagging program as a success in minimizing illegal harvest? Are there ongoing sources of illegal commercial harvest?

   Yes, NC deems the current tagging program a success. NC does not feel there is any significant commercial harvest of striped bass that are illegally sold (i.e. sold and not reported through the tagging program) to either individuals, seafood dealers, or restaurants. There is currently no rule or statute in place that requires seafood harvested in a commercial fishing operation to be sold. A person holding a SCFL or RSCFL can legally harvest striped bass at the allowed commercial trip limit and take them home to keep for personal consumption. So there is a possibility of some unreported harvest. If it is not sold to a licensed seafood dealer that harvest will go unreported. However NC feels this situation is minimal. Starting December 2025, a new state law will require all fish that are commercially harvested to be reported to a dealer, regardless of if that fish is sold or not. https://ncleg.gov/Sessions/2023/Bills/House/PDF/H600v8.pdf .

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

FROM: **Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel**

DATE: **July 29, 2025**

SUBJECT: **Advisory Panel Member Comments on Draft Addendum III for Board Review**

The Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel (AP) met via webinar on July 28, 2025 to receive an update on the revised management options in Draft Addendum III for Board review. If Draft Addendum III is approved for public comment, an AP meeting will be scheduled for October to gather AP recommendations on the specific options in the draft addendum.

Advisory Panel Members in Attendance
Eleanor Bochenek (AP Chair, NJ rec, fisheries scientist)
Peter Whelan (AP Vice Chair, NH recreational)
Peter Fallon (ME for-hire)
Peter Whelan (NH recreational)
Patrick Paquette (MA recreational)
Craig Poosikian (MA commercial)
Andy Dangelo (RI for-hire)
Peter Jenkins (RI recreational)
Toby Lapinski (CT recreational)
Julie Evans (NY for-hire, commercial)
Tom Fote (NJ recreational)
Charles (Eddie) Green (MD for-hire/rec)
Dennis Fleming (PRFC rec/processer/dealer)
Will Poston (DC recreational)
Bill Hall (VA recreational)
Kelly Place (VA commercial)
Jon Worthington (NC commercial)

ASMFC Staff: Emilie Franke, Katie Drew
Board Members in Attendance: Chris Batsavage, Nichola Meserve, David Sikorski, Megan Ware
Public in Attendance: Rick Bellavance, Jesse Hornstein, Mike Waine

The following are comments from individual AP members. These are not consensus AP statements.

Option Section 3.1: Method to Measure Total Length of a Striped Bass
No AP member comments. The AP previously discussed this issue in April 2025 noting general support for a standard coastwide definition of total length.

Option Section 3.2: Commercial Tagging Requirements: Point of Sale vs. Point of Harvest
One AP member noted concern and uncertainty about what the new tag allocation and distribution processes would be in states if they must switch from point-of-sale to point-of-harvest. The AP member noted it would be easier for states to manage tags at the dealers rather than the harvesters.

One AP member noted support for expanding the options to consider allowing tagging at point of landing instead of point of harvest to address safety concerns with tagging at point of harvest.

Option Section 3.3: Maryland Chesapeake Bay Recreational Season Baseline
Regarding the proposed opening of April to catch-and-release, one AP member noted concern about the impact of allowing catch-and-release fishing on pre-spawn fish.

One AP member noted concern about introducing the uncertainty associated with changing the season while a reduction is being considered.

One AP member recommends the PDT and/or TC review what portion of the Maryland season would be subject to the uncertainty buffer if there is no reduction. The draft addendum currently proposes shortening the wave 3 or wave 6 harvest period to meet the buffer, but the TC/PDT should discuss whether other parts of the season should be changed to meet the buffer.

Option Section 3.4: Reduction in Fishery Removals to Support Stock Rebuilding
Two AP members support bringing both the -12% and -18% reduction options to public comment. They noted it would be best to have a range of options in the document and that new information at the October meeting on this year's young-of-year surveys may inform which reduction to implement.

One AP member noted the uncertainty in the projections, particularly comparing projections using the preliminary MRIP data with projections using the final MRIP data. There is substantial overlap in the confidence intervals.

One AP member commented that recruitment is the real problem, not spawning stock biomass levels. Multiple reductions have been implemented over the past decade and recruitment has not improved. Research is needed to determine what is impacting recruitment and what is happening in the Chesapeake Bay.

One AP member noted concern that no-targeting closures are still being considered even though the Law Enforcement Committee has noted they are unenforceable.

Two AP members noted support for the document including options where the commercial sector takes no reduction. The commercial sector consistently underutilizes its quota and is managed by strict accountability measures (i.e., quota paybacks), while the recreational sector

does not have the same accountability and is responsible for the increases in fishery removals in recent years.

Other Topics

One AP member noted concern that the socioeconomic impact section of the draft addendum does not sufficiently convey the negative economic impact of the 2024 Addendum II measures, particularly the reduction to a 1-fish bag limit for the Maryland charter fleet in the Chesapeake Bay.

One AP member noted that when summarizing and communicating public comments, it would be helpful to separate comments by sector/mode (e.g., private recreational anglers, charter captains, commercial harvesters, etc.). It would be helpful to understand how much of each sector/mode support an option (e.g., X percent of charter captains who submitted comments support Option A).

One AP member noted concern about the estimate of commercial discards and the average reported weight of Maryland commercially harvested striped bass. On commercial discards, the concern is the number of discards relative to harvest has decreased over time which they noted does not seem logical. On Maryland's average weight, they noted concern that Maryland's reported average weight of a commercially harvested fish (just over four pounds) is much smaller than anticipated.

- ASMFC Staff Response on Commercial Discards: The very low estimates of discards in recent years are consistent with the very low recruitment over those years, since there are fewer undersize fish available to be caught and discarded compared to previous years. Declines in the reporting rate of tagged fish in recent years could also contribute to the lower estimates. However, estimates of discards from the tagging approach were similar to the estimates using observer data in the ocean during the last benchmark. The TC-SAS will be looking into this more for the next benchmark.
- ASMFC Staff Response on Maryland Average Weight: Maryland DNR consistently reports an average weight of 4-5 pounds for commercially harvested fish. This likely reflects the availability of these smaller fish in the Bay, as the average weight for recreational fish based on MRIP data has also been about 4 pounds for the past several years. MDDNR also conducts regular commercial sampling which generally corroborates the average weight from the reported pounds/number of fish tracked through Maryland checkstations/harvest reports/electronic reporting.

From: ASMFC
To: Comments
Subject: [External] [New] New public comment for 2025 Summer Meeting
Date: Monday, July 28, 2025 7:57:02 AM

2025 Summer Meeting

Action Title
2025 Summer Meeting
Action URL
https://asmfc.org/events/2025-summer-meeting/
Name
Rick Bellavance
Email
rickbellavance@gmail.com
State
Rhode Island
Comment

Dear Atlantic Striped Bass Board,

I apologize for the delay in commenting for the summer meeting. As you may imagine it's a challenge to find extra time during the height of my truncated season.
Regarding Striped Bass management, I am concerned that the poor recruitment that has been reported over the past several years is being influenced by management decisions that are designed to protect as much SSB as possible. I would like to board to consider the possibility that the large SSB we currently have is actually limiting spawning triggers within the stock. We have had a variety of environmental conditions over the past 6 years, yet no real change in the spawning output. Maybe something else is in play, like the stock does not feel compelled to spawn due to excessive SSB in the water. I would ask the board to consider giving a management strategy that reduces the SSB a chance. We know a low SSB can produce healthy year classes so the risk of testing this hypothesis seems limited.
I would also like to share that I believe the Chesapeake Bay is not as influencing as it was 20 years ago. In Southern New England, we routinely see smaller fish from 10-25 inches and I believe they are coming from other spawning areas. There are good numbers of fish entering the fishery each year that are not considered in the current assessment model.
It may also be the time to reconsider the productivity regime we are in for Striped Bass and set expectations accordingly.
Lastly I would like to pass along that we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of sandbar sharks in southern New England in late July thru Mid September. These sharks have found an easy meal in the large striped bass that are released this time of year. I would argue the discard mortality is highest during this period. Obviously I would prefer to harvest a fish or two for my customers instead of feeding them to sharks post release, but another choice could be no targeting of striped bass during this period. There is nothing good coming from striped bass fishing under these conditions so close it for everyone.
Thanks for the chance to offer my brief comments and observations. I've pretty much been driven out of the striped bass fishery under the current management strategy, but with Cod closed, no fluke to catch, bluefin regulations getting more restrictive, and shark prohibitions, it's really challenging to maintain a

viable business. The high abundance of striped bass seems like an opportunity to afford the public a chance to fish4dinner while preserving the historic for-hire businesses along the coast.
Thanks,
Capt Rick Bellavance
Priority Fishing Charters
Point Judith Rhode Island

Maryland Charter Boat Association, Inc.

Date: July 29, 2025
To: Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Maryland's proposed new baseline must be rejected unless it is based on accurate, complete, and transparent data. The current proposal is misleading and omits critical facts that jeopardize the integrity of the ongoing ten-year striped bass rebuilding program—now in its sixth year.

In 2024, Maryland DNR deemed the spawning stock crisis so severe that it extended closures from May 1 to May 15, in addition to the long-standing April closure. Yet today, it proposes opening April to catch-and-release of pregnant females without addressing last year's emergency actions. This contradiction raises serious concerns about Maryland's commitment to science-based conservation.

April has been closed for five years to protect spawning fish. Opening it now will lead to a significant increase in fishing activity, particularly in vulnerable areas like Eastern Bay, a known staging ground for spawning females. Catch-and-release during this critical time results in repeated handling, elevated stress, and increased mortality—both immediate and delayed. Lactic acid buildup from stress renders eggs sterile, and removing females from the water can cause egg discharge. These effects are not speculative; they are supported by marine biology and peer-reviewed research.
We must protect the future of this fishery. Allowing catch-and-release in April undermines the very goals Maryland claimed to support last year. This is not a balanced proposal—it's a step backward with long-term damage.

The ecological cost is significant. A single female can carry 5–7 million eggs. Premature discharge or egg sterility could eliminate tens of thousands of juvenile fish each season. Maryland DNR's own estimate—that their plan saves 266 fish—ignores the far greater unseen loss through disrupted spawning.

This proposal does not reflect a shared stakeholder interest. It benefits a vocal minority at the expense of long-term stock health. Rebuilding requires consistent, science-driven policy—not reactive rollbacks.

We urge the Technical Committee to conduct a thorough analysis of expected mortality and reproductive loss under this plan. Conservation must take precedence over convenience. Protecting the spawning stock in April is essential to ensuring a sustainable future for striped bass.

Sincerely,

Brian Hardman

Brian L. Hardman
President
Maryland Charter Boat Association