



New York Coalition of Recreational Fisherman

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**Ms. Tina Berger
Public Affairs Specialist
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1444 I Street, NW Sixth Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005**

Dear Ms. Berger;

We are submitting these comments for consideration regarding Draft Addendum II for striped bass and wish that it be entered into the public record.

Many of us involved in various aspects of recreational fishing for striped bass are often amazed at some of the proposals and rule changes that are offered for the species. Striped bass management is one, if not the best, management success story in the history of saltwater fisheries, yet there seems to be an ongoing agenda on the part of some people to undo this great accomplishment in management by surrendering more and more striped bass to mortality caused by various user groups.

Although we're confident that the efforts of the Technical Committee are both well intentioned and based on reasonable science, sometimes the scientific data doesn't tell the entire story nor does it relate reality entirely accurately. For example, we've surveyed the logbooks of a number of the best surf and small boat striped bass anglers on Long Island and although some report having continued good years, most revealed logs to us that showed a steady decline over the last decade or so in both the number of stripers caught and the size of those fish. These data were recorded in spite of either steady or increased fishing effort. Such consistent and common place data over a period of 15 years of record keeping should not be dismissed as idiosyncratic, anecdotal, or a reflection of new habits of the species. We have repeatedly heard these excuses used to explain recent declines in the fishing quality for striped bass in some areas and venues of fishing, yet logic demands that although such excuses and explanations may be valid for the short term (1 or 2 years), it cannot explain consistent data that persists among many records for more than a decade. At some point, anecdotal evidence gains in significance.

Beyond our surveys, the ASMFC web site shows declines in female spawning biomass and many more inconsistencies in the young of the year indices than was true in the bulk of the 1990s. It seems to us that a decline off the striped bass pendulum high of the 1990s and early 2000s that stimulated so much interest in conservation, fisheries management, economic recreational fishing growth (as applied to striped bass fishing) should not be taken lightly. Although good numbers of stripers continued in the east coast migration, we are concerned because we are beginning to see the same declines in widespread

consistent good catches that were noted and yet ignored by many fisheries managers and biologists during the early 1980s. In spite of the reluctance of these experts to believe that a major problem was developing with striped bass populations then, the population quickly crashed and a moratorium was necessary to revive the migration. In the 1980s the excuse for diminishing catches was "cycles". Let's not make that kind of mistake again. Although recruitment declined in the 1970s and 1980s, it was greed, over harvesting, and neglect that created the steep decline and the need for strict management intervention.

In light of the experiences of reduces catches; both regionally and by venue, it seems to us that we should once again consider conservation rather than increasing mortality. Although it is tempting to assuage the demands of commercial fishermen who are intent on making as much money off a given species as they can and as fast as possible, there exists here a greater economic imperative. There are more jobs, more economic benefits, and an overall greater benefit to regional economies achieved through heighten recreational interest than via a small number of commercial fishermen. Consistent recreational success throughout the east coast requires a very large coastal striped bass population because unlike nets, fish must choose to hit a lure or bait.

With a saltwater license looming in our future, it also stands to reason that once anglers pay for a license their expectations for success will increase. We note the precedent for this statement is found in the history of freshwater licenses and changes in the goals of fisheries management. We should, we believe, stay ahead of this curve and anticipate this future.

Therefore, given all of these realities, as well as present and future imperatives, we are strongly against rolling over unused commercial quotas from one year to the next. We are also strongly against increases in the commercial quotas.

Respectfully submitted;