



## Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association

8461 Ft. Smallwood Rd, Suite C, Pasadena, MD 21122 - 410-255-5535 - [www.mssa.net](http://www.mssa.net)

September 30, 2014

Mike Waine  
Fishery Management Plan Coordinator  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Waine and ASMFC Members,

For over 31 years the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association (MSSA) has been representing Maryland's recreational anglers. With over 7,100 members we have created the most diverse and largest fishing organization in Maryland and perhaps the Mid-Atlantic.

For the past few months the MSSA has been seeking feedback from its extensive and diverse membership base regarding the proposed striped bass reductions outlined in Draft Addendum IV. The feedback came from social media sites, online forums, monthly chapter meetings, and several Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) informational meetings. We feel that our position accurately represents the overall sentiment of sportfishermen throughout Maryland.

When looking at Draft Addendum IV and deciding on the proposed options we considered the overarching statement – balancing conservation with socio-economics.

### **Key Facts When Making A Decision:**

- Striped bass is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring
- Current stock biomass is just above the point when ASMFC declared striped bass recovered in 1995
- Coastal impact on Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) mortality is considerably higher than that of the Chesapeake, therefore should have separate reference points
- 70 – 90% of Chesapeake Bay striped bass are male
- Maryland has been more conservative than coastal states when it comes to protecting the SSB (current Trophy Season regs: 1 fish, minimum 28")

When making this decision it is also important to understand the values adopted by the ASMFC within their strategic plan for 2014-2018. Here are a few of the more important values

- Decisions based on sound science
- Work cooperatively with honesty, integrity, and fairness
- Balancing resource conservation with the socio-economic success

### **Coastal Recreational Options**

**At this time the MSSA believes Option B1, a bag limit of one fish at the current 28-inch minimum within a one year time frame is in the best interest of our anglers here in Maryland**

#### **Coastal Recreational OPTION B1**

#### **Chesapeake Bay Recreational OPTION C4**

#### **Important Note**

Imperative the ASMFC initiates a draft addendum for Chesapeake Bay reference points as soon as possible



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and for the sustainability of our striped bass fishery. This option would translate into a 36 inch minimum for our Spring Trophy season according to Maryland DNR. We would like to note that the MSSA has implemented a 36 inch minimum within its spring tournament for the past three years.

Why MSSA is Suggesting Option B1:

- Reducing the individual bag limit by one fish on the coast offers a 31% reduction in harvest, bringing the fishing mortality in line or above the target
- With the 2010 and 2011 recruitment years being the most robust of recent, it's important to protect those females until at least 90% can spawn (age 5-8) at least once before harvest.
- ASFMC has previously stated that reducing fishing mortality on fish aged 8-12 (32- to 40-inch fish) by half would result in "much greater egg production in the stock and an age distribution in which older fish are much more dominant"; as such, any slot option (proposed in options B4, B6, B7, B8, or B9) which focuses undue harvest pressure on more 'fertile' age/size fish in the stock could be counterproductive to conservation efforts.

### Summer/Fall Chesapeake Bay Options:

**At this time the MSSA believes Option C4, a two fish bag limit with a 20 inch minimum, is in the best interest of Maryland recreational anglers and represents a majority of angler sentiment. This option would achieve an estimated 21% reduction **within 3 years**. We received a tremendous amount of feedback on this fishery with a large majority agreeing that a two fish bag limit was important to maintain as well as season length.**

### Additional Recommendations

- In addition to Option B1 and C4, we believe the ASMFC should continue its efforts to press the Technical Committee to agree on Chesapeake Bay reference points and initiate another draft addendum as soon as possible.
- Continue the efforts to put in place a maximum size limit on the commercial striped bass fishery in Virginia, similar to Maryland which is a 36 inch maximum.
- Continue to focus enforcement on the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) up and down the Atlantic Coast.

The MSSA believes that we can, and should, manage this fishery balancing both conservation and socio-economics. For many years the MSSA has been advocating for more economic data not only for Maryland's recreational fishery but for the entire Atlantic Coast, as this should play a major role in determining management options such as these. We are encouraged to see the DNR and the ASMFC using this language moving forward.

V/R

Dave Smith  
Executive Director