



## Stripers Forever 2007 Annual Fishing Survey Results

In 2007 we compiled 621 surveys compared to 445 in 2006. We had double digit returns from most states from NC to ME, with more than 150 each from MA and NJ. We believe that this year's survey has again produced a good representative sample of sentiments from fishers all along the striper's migratory range. We will be sending this information to the press and to fishery policy makers everywhere. We hope that you will use it personally and that you share it with your local club or fishing organization to advocate for the goal of coast-wide striped bass game fish.

The complete Excel spreadsheet of *Survey Totals* is posted to this same web page. Another document entitled *Key Comparisons* can be found there also along with the actual survey that was sent out.

Here is a summary of the answers by question #.

2, 3. About 70% of respondents fish predominately from boats, and about 30% mostly from shore. 76% have more than 10 years of experience fishing for striped bass.

4. In 2007 43% of the anglers indicated that the quality of fishing for stripers was worse or much worse – the same as 2005 and 2006. Only 34% felt that it was improved while the remainder thought it was pretty much unchanged. Those who saw the fishery as improving was down slightly from 2006 (36%). It should be noted that the meaning of "quality" is quite subjective. Some anglers said that the "quality of stripers fishing had improved greatly" but then said that they were catching fewer and/or smaller fish. Clearly, "quality of fishing" means a lot more to some fishers than either the quantity or size of the fish being caught.

5. As to the size of the stripers being caught, the majority (57%) reported the average size of the stripers they caught was declining, compared to 22% who felt it was increasing. This is essentially unchanged from the 2006 and 2007 surveys. We noted numerous comments to the effect that the size of stripers may be seen as running a bit smaller over the last five years, but that the size of today's average fish is very much smaller than it was 10 years ago.

6. The greatest statistical change in 2007 concerned the number of fish caught per hour. 48% of respondents said they caught fewer or many fewer fish per hour in 2007. This is the third straight year that this number has increased. Not surprisingly, the percentage of fishermen who reported catching more fish dropped to a new low of 17%. Stated a little differently, nearly three times as many anglers felt that their hourly catch was dropping as thought it was rising.

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7. For the fifth consecutive year, the number of members whose interest in guided trips has remained in the 58-60% range, a tribute to the allure of stripers as a game fish.

8, 9, 10. 75% of responding anglers felt that a small fish should be allowed for food. Of those, 62% felt that it should be offered instead of a larger fish. Many anglers commented that we must stop the killing of so many large stripers and/or that shifting some of the personal harvest to smaller fish made sense. Many respondents commented that they felt no bass of any size should be taken until the population had recovered to better levels.

11, 12. Support for a slot limit to take the pressure off large breeders was at 74%, the same as the 2005 and 2006 annual surveys. Votes were very evenly split on what the slot size should be, with 20"-26" garnering slightly more votes than 22"-28". Members in every state widely favored a slot limit in our survey. Many respondents cited the success of Texas and Florida, which employ both slot limits and game fish status to manage red drum and snook.

13. The mission of Stripers Forever – to achieve game fish status for striped bass -- is frequently challenged by those who claim that our real goal is to take for recreational anglers all the fish presently caught by the commercial fishery, the "quota grab" accusation. The results from every one of our five annual member surveys show just how erroneous that interpretation is. A record high 87% of those surveyed want at least 50% of the commercial catch reserved for conservation, and not assigned to increased recreational bag limits. In 2007, 34% want to set aside the entire commercial quota for conservation. That is up from 33% in 2006 and 28% in 2005.

14, 15. The popularity of using a stamp to buy out the commercial fishery remained at a high 74% of respondents.

#### **Guides Section**

In 2007 we received surveys from a record 56 guides. The number of guides who felt that their business was improving was almost identical to those who thought it was declining. Considering the increasingly negative perception of angling quality, it is good news that the guides are still doing well. A thriving guiding business is important evidence of both the social and economic value of recreational fishing for striped bass.

#### **Other Comments**

We received a variety of comments that can be read on the second tab of the Survey Totals Excel spreadsheet. Comments that were seen repeatedly included: put an end to the commercial fishery, use more "fish-friendly" tackle like circle hooks; and adopt management measures to take the pressure off larger striped bass.

Question # and answer	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	PA	DE	MD	VA	NC	SC	totals
<b>Personal use angler's section</b>														
<b>State of the Fishery 2007</b>														
<b>1. What state</b>	78	6	157	37	51	66	154	1	10	41	14	6		621
<b>2. I fish from a boat what percentage of the time.</b>														
<25%	16		51	8	12	28	54		3	4	1			177
25 - 49	3		6	1	1	2	10		1					24
50-74	7		18	4	6	3	14			3	2			57
>75%	47	6	77	23	32	32	75	1	6	34	11	6		350
<b>3. I have fished regularly for stripers for this many years.</b>														
<5 years	7		12	2	2	4	12			3			1	43
5-9 years	8	3	25	10	7	15	27		1	2	1	1		100
>10	57	3	110	23	40	45	108	1	9	34	12	4		446
<b>4. In my opinion striper fishing in the past five years has changed as follows:</b>														
much worse	18		10		5	5	15		2	5			1	61
worse	30	1	59	10	16	24	43		5	13	8		2	211
same	17	1	42	9	11	21	35	1		15	1		3	156
improved somewhat	11	4	40	12	16	10	35		3	5	3			139
improved greatly	1		6	4	2	5	23			2	2			45
<b>5. The average size of the stripers that I catch now has changed as follows:</b>														
much smaller	32		20	2	14	13	35			5	3		1	128
somewhat smaller	27	3	63	12	12	29	47	1	2	20	4		2	222
no change	9	1	38	7	13	9	35			12	2		3	129
somewhat larger	10	2	33	13	11	12	31		3	4	3			122
much larger			1	1	1	2	5			1	2			13
<b>6. The number of stripers I catch per hour of fishing time on the water is:</b>														
many fewer	22		15	4	8	9	24			3	7	1	2	95
fewer	33	2	45	8	17	22	43	1	2	15	7		3	198
about the same	17	3	64	10	21	25	57		3	13	3		1	217
more	5	1	29	12	5	7	21		1	2	2			85
many more	1		1		1	2	9		1	1	1			17
<b>7. Because of the changes in the striped bass fishery my inclination to take a professionally guided striped bass trip has changed as follows:</b>														
less likely	36	2	47	8	21	22	59	1	7	15	6		3	227
about the same	29	3	68	21	25	29	64		3	22	7		3	274
more likely	5	1	23	3	5	5	16			4	1			63
<i>Bag and size limit</i>														

**8. Forgetting for a moment current striped bass regulations, and starting with a clean sheet, I think that recreational anglers should be able to keep at least one school striper (possibly different from state to state, but probably between 18 and 28 inches in length) per day for personal consumption.**

yes	61	5	108	20	40	35	118		9	39	14	5	454
no	14	1	45	16	11	28	35	1	1	1		1	154

**9. If you answered yes to #8, should this smaller fish be allowed instead of, or in addition to, a bass of some larger size?**

instead of	49	4	71	13	26	26	56		7	23	2	1	278
in addition to	11	1	35	7	13	9	61		2	16	12	4	171

**10. If you answered no to #8 what should the minimum size be?**

28	5		20	8	4	10	18	1	1	1	1	1	70
32	1		16	4	4	6	5						36
36	2		4	2		10	8						26
40	1						1						2

**10. Do you think we should have a slot limit for recreationally caught stripers?**

yes	70	6	116	20	38	37	111	1	9	25	9	5	447
no	4		35	16	14	25	40		1	14	4	1	154

**12. Slot preference**

20-26	49	3	39	3	12	5	30		4	11	1		157
22-28	15	2	31	6	13	15	47		2	10	4	2	147
24-30	5	1	42	11	13	17	37	1	3	4	5	3	142

**13. When commercial fishing is ended, what percentage of the current commercial quota should be saved from harvest as a conservation buffer? The rest would be used to liberalize the recreational harvest. 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%**

0%	1												1
25%	9	1	15	5	3	6	25		1	6	2	1	74
50	16	1	46	10	21	19	57	1	5	18	6	1	201
75	18	2	24	11	13	11	27		2	5	4	1	118
100%	32	2	62	8	12	25	41		2	11	2	3	200

**14. Would you favor legislation that creates a striped bass stamp costing between \$10.00 and \$25.00 per year with the funds earmarked to buyout the current commercial fishery?**

yes	61	6	113	26	38	42	98	1	7	32	12	5	441
no	18		35	9	13	20	51		3	5	2	1	157

**15. If you answered yes to #14, should this stamp program end after a fixed number of years, or should the fee continue to fund enforcement and striped bass enhancement programs?**

end	16	3	24	7	9	11	26	1	4	11	1	2	115
continue	45	3	88	19	29	32	71		3	23	11	3	327

**16. My personal comments on striped bass management that you have not covered are? See sheet #2.**

**Guides Section**

<b>17. How has your guiding business for striped bass changed because of the fishery in the last five years?</b>									
worsened considerably	1	2	1			1	1	6	
worsened a little	7	1	2		2	1		15	
not changed	2	4			4	4		15	
imporved somewhat	1	6	4	2		1		14	
improved a great deal	1	1	1		1	2		6	
<b>18. How important is keeping a striped bass to your clients?</b>								56 guides	
not very important	7	7	1	1	2	2		20	
somewhat important	5	5	2	2	2	4	1	21	
very important		2	4		3	3	3	1	16
<b>19. How important to your clients is catching a lot of stripers per trip?</b>									
not very important		2			2	3			7
somewhat important	9	6	4	2	2	2	3		28
very important	3	6	3		3	3	1	1	20
<b>20. How important is catching a really large striper to your clients?</b>									
not very important	1	2	1	1		1			7
somewhat important	6	9	4	1	3	5	2		30
very important	6	3	2	1	4	2	1	1	20
<b>21. Which is more important to my clients, catching big fish or catching a lot of fish?</b>									
big fish	6	5	2	2	4	2	2		23
many fish	5	9	5	1	2	5	2	1	30
<b>22. I am more likely than I was 5 years ago to make new investments in equipment for my striped bass guiding business?</b>									
yes	7	10	3		4	4			28
no	4	2	3	2	2	3	4	1	21
<b>23. My comments as to how the management of striped bass is affecting my guiding business:</b>								<b>See Sheet 2.</b>	

**Personal angler comments**

many anglers say let's stop the killing of all big fish

kill no stripers of any size until fishery rebounds

NJ angler likes Maine regs

Guide says that on 30 plus trips out on the Kennebec not one fish larger than 28 inches caught

Maine guide says worst year in last 10 for numbers of fish and customers. He and 14 other bait fishing boats did not land a 40 inch fish all summer.

require circle hooks for bait and limit lures to one treble hook

Runs a guide booking service out of a tackle shop for a number of guides. Business was down 30% in 2007 because of the lack of large bass.

Should be a season limit on the number of large bass a customer can keep.

Says daily limit of catch and release stripers should be set at 10-20 fish or so

Guide says that what people want is to hook into fish. They don't have to kill or even land them, but they want to hook some large fish.

Well known angler with 55 years experience says has seen the number of large fish slide for the last 5 years and is really worried about it

keeps good records and says large fish 30% fewer than 05/06 and many fewer really large fish

ME guide says that big fish in Maine have all but disappeared

The current commercial fishery targeting the large fish makes no sense says one biologist.

One MA guide says he is losing booking during the commercial season as the clients don't want to compete with the commercial fishermen.

MA says better fishing and the ability to keep a small bass for the table would bring more folks into the fishery and increase awareness of nature.

Ban yo yoing and other commercial tricks...

One man from MD says ban all commercial fishing of every kind, feels the whole concept is obsolete and destructive.

MA guide disappointed with current state of fishery and considering just guiding in May and June when more small bass are around.

Several anglers have said it is time for the federal government to take over managing striped bass because of its migratory nature.

MA angler and others say take measures to limit hook and release mortality

Several anglers suggest annual limit via tags that would come on license

Make some of the estuaries barbless artificial lure only zones.

Guide from NY says management of striped bass is treasonous...should be no kill above 36"

Moriches NY says keeps good records for last 10 years, steady downward trend and 2007 worst for him and all his buddies.

Fisheries PhD biologist says lowest number of fish caught in a decade, but bigger than usual - the sign of a declining fishery.

This is not rocket science. Do what Texas did. Eliminate nets and commercial fishing, put in a slot limit, stop killing the big fish.

Several said that the decline in the last 5 years is one thing, but the decline from 8 or 10 years ago is great. They fear a new crash.

# have said release everything until fishing recovers

MD angler says ban chumming

Comments