



Stripers Forever 2010 Annual Fishing Survey Results

In 2010 we received a record 1068 survey responses, up 17.5% from 906 in 2009. 805 of the respondents have fished for stripers for more than 10 years, so a great many of these people fished through both the last striped bass collapse and the recovery of the late 1980s and 1990s. We believe that this year's survey has again produced a good representative sampling of sentiments from fishers all along the striper's migratory range, and that the results, taken with those of the previous 7 survey years paint an accurate picture of the direction striped bass fishing is heading, which unfortunately is not good. We will send this information to the press and to fishery policy makers everywhere. We hope that you will use this information personally to help us advocate for the goal of coast-wide striped bass game fish. Please share the results with your local fishing club, home town newspaper, and elected officials that you may know.

The complete Excel spreadsheet of *Survey Totals* is also attached to this web page. You will find both the questions and the responses listed. The second tab at the bottom shows comments that were received; as usual there were some very good ones. Another document entitled *Key Comparisons* is also included. Key Comparisons graphs out the answers to some key survey questions over the seven years we have been doing the survey.

Here is a summary of the answers by question #.

2. About 57% of respondents fish predominately from a boat and about 33% mostly from shore.

4. A record 73.4% of the anglers in 2010 indicated that the quality of fishing for stripers was worse or much worse – up every year from the 33% we received in 2003!!!! Only 13.9% felt that it was improved, It should be noted that the meaning of “quality” is quite subjective

5. 46.2% reported the average size of the stripers they caught was smaller, compared to 31.6% seeing an increase.

6. In 2008 the percentage of anglers reporting catching fewer, or many fewer fish per hour was an alarming 66% up from just 37% in 2003. In 2009 this number grew to 72%, and in 2010 it was at 76%. Less than 7% of anglers reported they caught more fish. Many comments were received about how few fish were being caught.

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7. Members who said that they were equally or more inclined to take guided trips numbered 52%, better than 44% in 2009 and about the same as the 51% in 2008%. Thankfully this statistic does not appear to be getting any worse, though the guides sentiments in this survey were decidedly more negative even in the improving economic climate. More about that in the guides section below.

9, 10. 71.7% of responding anglers felt that a small fish should be allowed for food – virtually the same as last year. Of those, 69.5% felt that it should be offered instead of a larger fish. These responses were virtually the same as in 2009 and 2008.

11. Of the respondents who want a high minimum size for striped bass 55% prefer 28 inches.

12. Support for a slot limit dropped a bit to 70.8%, though the number has been in the 70 to 75% range every year. Members in every state widely favored a slot limit, which is undoubtedly because everyone is concerned about the number of large fish being removed from the population. We think that a slot or smaller fish would be even more popular were it not for the fact that many anglers now believe that no striped bass should be killed at all given the declining condition of the fishery.

13. Of those who believe that a slot limit is right for striped bass, the votes are split quite evenly over the three choices we gave with only a slight preference for the 20-26” size range over the two larger sizes.

14. 85% of those surveyed want 50% or more of the commercial catch reserved for conservation and not assigned to increased recreational bag limits.

15, 16. The use of a stamp to buy out the commercial fishery was favored by 72% of respondents, and 63% said the stamp should continue even after the commercial fishery is bought out.

17. 78% of those responding to the survey said that SF should advocate for the use of circle hooks when bait fishing for striped bass.

18. We received a variety of comments that can be read on the second tab of the *Survey Totals* Excel spreadsheet. Comments made 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.

Guides Section

This year we received surveys from a record 109 guides located in every coastal state but NH. Unfortunately 72% of them report that their business has been adversely affected by the smaller number of striped bass generally available. This was one of the guide comments that we received. *“For most charters, guides, captains, finding and catching fish is paramount to having a successful business. The cost associated with chartering a boat to go fishing, and then not catching anything or very few is going to ruin the striped bass charter industry pretty quickly.”*

Guiding jobs are good, sustainable, season-long jobs that can be maintained through the ups and downs of the population cycle with catch and release fishing. Providing the quality of fishery necessary to maintain and in fact nurture these jobs should be a top priority of fishery managers, but that does not seem to be the case.

Question # and answer ME NH MA RI CT NY NJ PA DE MD VA NC SC totals % respons

Personal use angler's section

State of the Fishery 2010

1. What state	110	15	221	64	61	102	224	3	8	55	20	6	2	1068	100%
2. I fish from a boat what percentage of the time.															
<25%	42	4	88	29	13	54	88	0	4	1	2	0	0	366	35.70%
25 - 49	12	1	13	4	10	3	13	0	2	1	3	0	0	79	7.7
50-74	5	1	26	2	1	6	23	0	0	5	1	1	0	87	8.5
>75%	51	9	92	29	37	39	100	3	2	48	14	5	2	494	48.1
3. I have fished regularly for stripers for this many years.															
<5 years	12	1	23	6	5	9	12	0	0	4	1	0	0	90	8.8
5-9 years	11	1	31	9	6	9	31	0	1	2	1	1	1	125	12.3
>10	87	13	165	49	50	83	180	3	6	48	18	5	1	805	78.9
4. In my opinion striper fishing in the past five years has changed as follows:															
much worse	75	9	72	19	12	19	34	1	3	12	4	2	0	300	29.5
worse	28	6	103	28	33	54	88	2	3	35	11	3	1	447	43.9
same	3	0	28	10	9	11	37	0	1	3	1	1	1	130	12.8
improved somewhat	3	0	11	7	6	14	49	0	1	3	2	0	0	118	11.6
improved greatly	0	0	3	0	1	4	12	0	0	0	1	0	0	23	2.3
5. The average size of the stripers that I catch now has changed as follows:															
much smaller	17	5	27	11	10	14	22	0	3	7	1	1	0	137	13.5
somewhat smaller	16	4	80	19	21	42	62	2	1	30	10	2	1	332	32.7
no change	13	0	45	15	15	22	53	1	3	15	2	3	1	224	22.1
somewhat larger	48	5	56	16	12	22	70	0	0	3	5	1	0	274	27
much larger	10	1	10	3	13	2	15	0	1	0	1	0	0	47	4.6
6. The number of stripers I catch per hour of fishing time on the water is:															
many fewer	80	10	91	23	17	30	58	2	4	16	4	1	0	376	36.9
fewer	23	5	85	26	24	39	87	1	2	32	12	4	0	396	38.8
about the same	5	0	34	11	13	24	56	0	1	5	1	1	2	180	17.6
more	1	0	8	3	6	8	20	0	1	2	2	0	0	61	6
many more	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	7	0.7
7. Because of the changes in the striped bass fishery my inclination to take a professionally guided striped bass trip has changed as follows:															
less likely	79	8	96	24	22	42	104	1	6	25	11	3	1	485	47.9
about the same	23	6	11	35	34	52	96	2	2	25	7	2	0	452	44.6
more likely	7	1	12	5	5	7	21	0	0	4	2	1	1	76	7.5
<i>Bag and size limit</i>															
9. 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	78	14	128	42	41	56	178	3	7	49	19	6	2	714	71.7
no	30	1	84	22	19	44	42	0	1	6	1	0	0	282	28.3

20. How important is keeping a striped bass to your clients?																
not very important	5	0	13	2	4	9	3	0	1	1	0	1	1	45	39.8	
somewhat important	7	0	4	2	2	2	10	0	0	2	1	0	0	37	32.7	
very important	1	0	3	2	0	2	6	1	0	4	3	0	0	31	27.4	
21. How important to your clients is catching a lot of stripers per trip?																
not very important	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3.5	
somewhat important	6	0	11	0	4	8	12	0	1	5	3	1	0	59	51.8	
very important	7	0	8	6	2	4	7	1	1	2	0	0	1	51	44.7	
22. How important is catching a really large striper to your clients?																
not very important	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	15	13.3	
somewhat important	6	0	14	6	3	8	12	0	1	5	3	1	0	69	61.1	
very important	5	0	5	0	2	5	5	1	0	1	1	1	1	29	25.7	
23. Which is more important to my clients, catching big fish or catching a lot of fish?																
big fish	4	0	7	0	3	7	5	0	0	2	1	1	1	38	33.6	
many fish	9	0	13	7	3	7	15	1	1	4	3	0	0	75	66.4	
24. I am more likely than I was 5 years ago to make new investments in equipment for my striped bass guiding business?																
yes	1	0	6	3	1	4	7	0	0	4	1	0	0	32	29.1	
no	12	0	14	4	4	9	11	1	1	3	3	1	1	78	70.9	

25. My comments as to how the management of striped bass is affecting my guiding business:

See Comments Tab below

Put them all back until data shows a return to healthy numbers; no striper is worth it's weight in meat.

Further monitoring of accidental by-catch of stripers by offshore seiners and long-liners and gillnetters is desperately needed in my area

The key to any fisheries management must transcend state lines--laws/regs must be consistent from state to state for each fishery.

slot limit size should be based on targeting healthy year classes that are not yet big breeders.....Perhaps a trophy tag to allow keeping a big fish it could help charters and pay for conservation efforts.

Your questions on bag limits need to be seasonal(Spring Summer Fall)one rule for all year won't work in my area.

we need a federal reg for the east coast

Bait fish management should be apart of a striper program. Many problems related to declines in striper populations especially in my area are due to lack of forage fish. Bunker, sand eels, spearing and bay anchovies have been on a steady decline for the last 8 years. Without a stable food source stripers are forced to eat other species and less normal food sources. Also in our Cape May area we have suffered two major algae blooms one in 2008 and 2010 which resulted in stripers leaving our back bay waters for almost two months. August 18th to October 18th this year. It was so bad I had to cancel 28 charters during that period of time as the oxygen levels were too low. 609 884 6440 if you would like more information. I believe the regs allow too many cows to be harvested for the good of the fishery.

Mycobacteriosis is the single greatest threat to the striped bass fishery today. More should be done to expose it to the public and to force regulators to deal with it, instead of ignoring it.

Barbless single hooks should also be required in this fishery.

I think that now might be a good time for SF to consider changing their focus from ending commercial striper fishing to actual striped bass conservation. The Comms are now also feeling the pain and it looks like we might actually be able to accomplish some real conservation measures if SF is willing to be abandon their hard-line gamefish ideology.

My personal experience fishing the Cape May waters reveals many hundreds of boats chunking for the large fish. We are killing way way way too many of the breeders. It is not hard to see a serious decline in this fishery if we do not restrict the harvest of these big breeders. Two fish over 28 inches is a terrible concept. One fish over 28 is plenty. I also believe all fish over a certain length, say 42 inches, must be released.....Capt Harv Increase the fines and/or penalties for those who illegally take striped bass. A slap on the wrist is not enough to discourage the poachers. A slap in the wallet may help our cause.

I am a master Maine registered guide and my number of inquiries from potential clients has fallen off a cliff this past 5 years. Part is the economy and part is the lousy fishing up here, I think.

Recreational fishermen are killing too many large stripers. there is wanton slaughter of exceptionally large breeding bass and your organization refuses to acknowledge that.

NJ should enact a slot program, where one fish 20' to 26' can be taken, and then another 28' to 36". Fish over 36" to 50" should be off limits, except for 1 bonus tag per angler, per year. This would allow the breeding stock to keep producing the young year class Stripers to keep the population up.

Brad,

Cheers from Art Howe III and my Dad, Art Howe Jr.

Regards, Art

Circle hook issue important, but I feel we should focus 100% on ending commercial bass fishing before we turn our attention to changing recreational fishing methods.

1. enforcement of a bass stamp might be tricky

2. Circle hooks might turn off bait f'men, whose support we need.

there needs to be a max size limit and limit on the number allowed. I think one should work. To many big bass are being taken.

Get the commercial interests out of the picture. Make Striped Bass a Game Fish!

1 fish per day in NY. A one a year tag for fish over 45"

make bait fishing for striped bass with treble hooks illegal

I run a charter boat from Montauk, Our biggest proplem is the use of live Bait. Porgies are th bait of choice here problem is you need to use short porgies to catch anything, some charters do it ido not,. to many big fish being killed and then released when a bigger one is taken. lots of just legal fish this fall, best in years. captain Mike Albronda charter boat Montauk

Gamefish status is a must with a by-catch penalty for commercial net boats that are taking stripers while netting forage species.

I feel there should be an immediate moratorium of the taking of any striped bass, regardless of size, until the striped bass fishery recovers.

The value of a striped bas caught recreationallly or on a guided/charter trip is worth tremendously more than those caught via commercial methods. Stripers should not be allowed to be taken commercially. Additionally, Virginia needs to outlaw menhaden fishery in Chesapeake Bay waters and do more to protect the winter fishery. Their striped bass limit should be no more than 1 fish per day per person and perhaps a slot limit thrown in to help conserve the species. The winter fishery management is a joke! There are scores of boats raping the large migrating breeding stock when they are most vulnerable to being caught. Additionally, I don't think Maryland should have an early catch and release season on the spawning grounds just so an angler may have the opportunity to catch one of the large fish ripe. Our numbers and sizes have declined and the Year of Young index has declined dramatically in the years since the late-March/Early April fishery has commenced. I would also like to see maryland close the season for stripers from 1 July to 15 August, to help alleviate the stress on the fish during the hottest part of the year here. Should reduce pressure on large bass

The state of new jersey has killed the RECREATIONAL fisherman and all the businesses that are linked to fishing,ie charter and party boat captains,bait shops,hotels,wawa's gas stations,ETC.

Any regs to help the SB fishery are good, but it is no the recreational fisherman that are destroying the species. The commercial boats that I see throw thousands of dead or dying 30+lb SB over board b/c it is not bass season is disgusting. I see this occur every year. These boats set there cod/pollock gear in SB migration runs and then just massacre the SB. So, slot limits will help, but until commercial fisherman learn what conservation means, the fishing industry is doomed. Keep up the good work.

I feel that the commercial herring fishery is a disaster for the health of striped bass stocks. They not only have a tremendously negative impact on an important food source for stripers, but also kill untold tons of stripers in their bycatch. Make stripers purely recreational.

The 3 mile distance from shore limit is unreasonable from many ports. I fully understand and agree with the size and catch limits (2 fish per man at 28 inches or greater in NJ) however it shouldn't matter where I need to go to catch these fish. What's the difference if I catch my 2 fish per man at 28 inches or greater 2.9 miles from the beach or 4 miles (I'm still killing only two fish per man at 28 inches)??

NO striped bass should be killed for any reason until the stocks are TOTALLY recovered. Then, minimal harvest and potential "shorter" seasons on this harvest. Maybe go to school on the southern "snook management"!??

I don't understand how commercial interest have any say in the management of Striped bass, they are not thinking of the fishes future, just about making as much money as they can!! The whole system sucks, as I'm a guide and a commercial fisherman. I watch often people poaching bass to bring to Mass. to sell and the DEM, DEP or whomever are of little help. Frustrating frustrating and frustrating as hell. Why would people want to ruin something that brings them so much joy....

I am a licensed guide that would consider guiding for stripers if the fishery rebounded. Difficult to justify guiding with poor catching.

The quality of the fishery declines drastically during and after commercial season

More trips with no success (keepers or fish at all), therefore fewer repeat customers.

I am a shore fly fishing guide so for the most part my clients are looking for an education and my experienced clients know that for the most part the western sound shore experience is schoolies.

Obviously less fish available every year regardless of time of year.

it would be great to have a national slot limit

2000 to 2005 I saw the most stripers of all sizes from small to keeper sizes. Now the same areas rarely do I see a keeper size bass. Numbers are way down. I believe our biggest problem is lack of bait fish. If there is little for them to eat they do not come into back bays or along the beach like they use to. 2010 has been worst year for total numbers of bass for the year and I release 99.9 percent of all bass. Demand is still there for charters but being honest I have to tell them like it is with the decline and they can not believe it. For my long time clients, they can not believe how it has declined over the years. 609 884 6440 for more information.

Lack of fish is affecting the entry of new people into the fishery. People who don't fish a lot and don't understand the fishery are less likely to repeat as customers than those who have more of a history with the fishery.

For most charters, guides, captains, finding and catching fish is paramount to having a successful business. The cost associated with chartering a boat to go fishing, and then not catching anything or very few is going to ruin the striped bass charter industry pretty quickly.

I've pretty much shut down my guiding business...

I started shore guiding again this year as I need the money and the market is still there. It's painful, though, as we rarely catch anything!

So far it has had no effect. People love killing the big breeders. The average client has no concept of fishery management. Clearly, the fishery will not sustain this level of killing the bigger fish. I wish ASMFC would establish more sensible guidelines for states to implement.

We are not catching the quantity or the quality of fish that we did 5 years ago.

My business is way down; Hook & Gun Guide Service.

Just ensure a healthy population of fish and all these questions are resolved.

I actually took this year off due to the poor showing early on of Stripers in my area as well as the economy being what it is. A lot more guides jumped into my small boat-back bay niche (getting away from the more expensive offshore runs) and made it that much harder for me to make ends meet.

Significant loss of personal income and to fishing/tourism on Martha's Vineyard by my clients

Charters with 20+ fish caught are far fewer now than they were 10 years ago. The fall fishery has totally crashed! I did not run a fall charter in 2010.

General comment: no fish this summer and probably less than 10 gallons of fuel used. Want to buy a boat?

we need to make this fish a game fish everywhere.

It is hard to determine with accuracy the impact of fishery over economy. My business changes over the years and I only wish the commercial killing of fish for the market were outlawed.

Bad press. Commercial gillnets turn off the clients

I have been warning potential clients that getting "skunked" on a trip is very likely unless they are above average anglers and discourage them from taking a trip unless they can be satisfied with the scenic experience, etc. rather than highly successful fishing experience. If I offered bait fishing it might be different.

this my 42 year in the business full time last year I sailed my 7000 trip we have a good stock of fish to work on. I have a Comm Bass license but I would like to see the Bass a game fish coast wide

Captain Mike Albronda charter boat Montauk

As a guide I'd like to see some serious enforcement take place in dealing with the runaway charter fishery in New Jersey and Virginia. Not only are they doing serious damage to the Stripers but they are hurting the rest of the charter industry with their practices of killing lots of fish and fishing in the EEZ.

My anglers are aware of the current situation regarding the plight of the striped bass through my communications with them, and they are still willing to hire me regardless. Therefore the investment in new equipment.

Fuel costs and the actual cost of living the past five years has led the major decline in our fishing business. There is always something to catch in our waters; and, although the striper is the prized fish most seek, good fishing is to be had on alternate species during the season from late May through early November.

Need more school bass

You guys have killed the fishing business

We have had to cancel some trips this year b/c the fishing was poor at certain times of the year. This means, gas, bait, equipment and gear purchases where way down.

I think the move from a one fish to a two fish limit in the recreational fishery has done considerable damage to our fishery.

The state of the striper fishery makes me reluctant to continue guiding. I think there should be no keeping of stripers at all!!!!

Striped Bass fishing is better than I've even seen it during my 25 year fishing career. I hope that the low bag limit of only two fish per man remains in tact to manage the population. I wouldn't mind seeing the size limit increase from 28 inches to 30 inches.

Guiding striped bass has dropped off the map for me!!! I still offer it, but will NOT take clients out if the fishing remains OFF the way it has been. If I am struggling catching stripers, how can I honestly put the "average client" on our beaches and meet their expectations? Most of my clients are there to learn, but fishing over water that is void of fish would be a dis-service to them!!! My customers are seeing the decline themselves and they ask what is happening. I tell them to many people want to kill the fish and not enough want to release them. We need to get people to brag with the camera instead of a dead fish at the dock.