

Stripers Forever
stripers@stripersforever.org

57 Boston Road
Newbury, MA 01951

www.stripersforever.org



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | May 5, 2023

Atlantic State Marine Fisheries Commission's Striped Bass Board Acts Quickly to Get Back on Track for Rebuilding the Stock by 2029

Emergency Action Will Revise 2023 Regulations – Effective Immediately

Arlington, VA | May 2, 2023: During the commission's spring meeting, the Striped Bass Management Board took historical and unprecedented action to protect the 2015 year class and ensure that the stock has a greater than 50% chance of rebuilding by 2029. The board initiated Addendum II and enacted emergency action which is effective immediately and will implement a coastwide slot limit of 28-31" for the harvest of striped bass. Under the 2021 fishing mortality rate the stock had a 97% chance of recovery, which dropped to less than 15% given the higher 2022 fishing mortality rate that more than doubled based on new MRIP (Marine Recreational Information Program) data.

The board initiated draft Addendum II to Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan. It will address 2024 management measures to reduce fishing mortality. Included will be the ocean recreational, Chesapeake Bay, and commercial fisheries. Modifications to the slot limit, possible seasonal harvest closures, and maximum size limits will all be considered to reduce fishing mortality back to the target for 2024. The board also plans to review the upcoming 2024 stock assessment and there is a provision in the approved motion that would allow for action to be taken if needed. The board will revisit draft Addendum II at the summer meeting, at which time the document could be approved for public comment or sent back to the technical committee for further development.

The emergency action will be in place for an initial 180-day term, ending October 28, 2023, but can be renewed by the board twice for a maximum length of 2 ½ years. This emergency action will likely remain in effect until Addendum II is finalized and new regulations are put in place for 2024. This 31-inch maximum size for harvest applies to all recreational fisheries where a higher (or no) maximum size applies. All bag limits, seasons, and gear restrictions will remain the same. States are now required to implement this required measure and change regulations as soon as possible but no later than July 2, 2023. The

commission will hold at least four hearings beginning in mid to late May to inform the public about the emergency action.

Lastly, the board took final action on Addendum I to Amendment 7 and approved Option E. This would allow the board to approve voluntary transfers of ocean commercial quotas between states. Importantly, this would not be allowed when the stock is deemed overfished. The board can also set certain criteria for these allowable transfers, including limits on how much, when the transfers occur, and the eligibility of a state to make the request based on total landings to date.

While we believe that there were many instances where board action could have been taken to avoid the need for such strong measures, we do commend the steps that were taken to get the stock back on track to recover by 2029. There was enormous outreach by anglers, guides, captains, companies, and conservation organizations to take immediate action. The board heard that call and acted upon it, we thank them for that. *"The striped bass community relies on an abundant stock, today the board did the right thing in making sure that we get back on track to rebuild it. Our collective voice was heard, we all became part of the process and created change. This is why we continue to fight for a brighter future for striped bass along the Atlantic coast."* **Taylor Vavra, Stripers Forever Vice President**

As Addendum II develops throughout the summer, we will keep tabs on its progress and provide updates at every turn. This action was certainly a step in the right direction, but this battle is far from over. The stock is a long way from being the healthy and abundant fishery we know it can be. Founded in 2004, Stripers Forever has been at the forefront of striped bass conservation for close to twenty years, and we don't plan on giving up anytime soon. A big thank you to all who continue to support us and who have stepped up to fight for the cause.