

ASMFC Striped Bass Advisory Panel Call
March 8, 2012

AP Members: Lou Bassano - recreational, Chuck Cassela – for hire/recreational, John Pedrick – recreational, Ed Cook – recreational, Ed O’Brien – for hire, Dave Sikorski - recreational, Arnold Leo – commercial, Dave Pecci – recreational, Kelly Place (chair) - commercial

Law Enforcement Committee: Mark Robson and Kurt Blanchard

TC Members: Alexei Sharov

ASMFC Staff: Kate Taylor

At the start of the call, two AP members commented that representation by the commercial fishermen was limited and it may not be appropriate for the AP call to continue without their input.

AP members were briefed on the law enforcement investigation on illegal harvest of striped bass in the Chesapeake Bay and the recommendations that come out of the investigation. The AP members were briefed on the Striped Bass Management Board meeting in February 2012 and the motion to initiate an addendum to address illegal striped bass harvest.

1. Is a uniform commercial tagging program in all states with a commercial fishery necessary? If so should this be mandated through an ASMFC Addendum as opposed to states going back and implementing on their own?
 - Unanimous approval of those on the call on the requirement of implementation of a commercial tagging program for states with a commercial fishery. There was support for development of this program through ASMFC.
2. If a tagging program is implemented, should the same color tag be used annually for all states (e.g. 2013 is yellow tags, 2014 is blue tags...) or should there also be different colors for different gears? What information should be included on the tags?
 - The AP liked the idea of a uniform color for each year, embossed with state of origin and the tag number which could be traced to fisherman.
3. If a tagging program is implemented, should all commercially harvested striped bass be required to be tagged at the point of harvest (vs. point of sale)?
 - The AP was concerned that there could be a safety issue in requiring tagging to be conducted specifically at point of harvest. AP members noted that striped bass are not tagged immediately at the point of harvest, but shortly after operations have concluded (i.e. the gear has been pulled). The AP agreed that all fish should be tagged prior to the fish being landed at the dock.
4. If a tagging program is implemented, should the number of tags printed by a state/jurisdiction be based on the average weight of legal-sized fish harvested (by gear) in open season divided into the quota? (Note: The number of tags printed and given to the states can include a buffer to account for operational loss of tags and other such reasons that tags reasonably are lost.)

- One AP member noted that since each state is different, there might be different ways to best distribute the tags
5. If a tagging program is implemented, should unused tags be required to be returned? If so should there be a penalty (e.g. no license renewal) if tags are not turned in?
 - The AP agreed that there should be accountability with the tags
 6. What are other ideas that would be necessary for the successful implementation of a commercial tagging program to reduce illegal harvest?
 - States without commercial fishery but big rec fishery prevent those fishermen from selling to other states
 - Arnold Leo noted that in NY once you've affixed the tag is to cut it out. It cannot be re-used. No tag system is going to prevent the illegal sale of untagged fish.
 7. What are appropriate penalties for state or federal commercial striped bass violations?
 - One AP member thought the most stringent of penalties for forgery of tags should be in place.
 - One AP member noted that a two year license revocation is an insufficient deterrent to illegal activity.
 - One AP member noted that the regulatory structure needs to be simple.
 8. What other actions should ASMFC be considering to reduce illegal commercial harvest of striped bass?
 - It was noted by one AP member that besides the fishermen and dealers, some tags are being re-used in retail markets (e.g. Philadelphia) and may be getting used by illegal recreational sale
 - Many members of the AP commented on the illegal harvest of striped bass in the EEZ and the need for increased enforcement to reduce this activity.
 - One AP member commented that in years when the fish are offshore (not in state waters, e.g. Virginia) there are still fish being weighed in. These fish were obviously harvested in the EEZ or illegally in NC.
 - One AP member commented that there should be increased coordination with the Coast Guard. The fishing boats have an organized warning system to alert when the Coast Guard boats come out.

AP members were interested in reviewing and commenting on the draft Addendum, and the management options developed by the working group, prior to the May Board meeting.