

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION  
AMENDMENT 5 TO THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN  
FOR ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS

**ADDENDUM I – 1997 FISHERIES**



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# **Addendum I to Amendment 5 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass**

## **1997 Fisheries**

### **INTRODUCTION**

On October 21, 1996, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Striped Bass Management Board called for an addendum to Amendment 5 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass. The purpose of this addendum is to develop appropriate management measures by Amendment 5. The Amendment specified quotas, bag limits, and seasons for the 1995 and 1996 fisheries, but did not outline 1997 regulations. This was done because 1997 was forecast to be the year that the final increase in mortality (to  $F = 0.40$ ) could occur, and a new management regime could be established through virtual Population Analysis (VPA). However, the VPA model could not be completed in time for setting 1997 regulations and tag-based mortality estimates for 1995 and 1996 striped bass fisheries were unavailable by spring 1996. On May 29, 1996, the Management Board voted to remain at an interim mortality rate of  $F=0.33$  for 1997, but still had to specify how that mortality rate could be accomplished through specific fishing regulations for the states.

Developing coastwide management measures for the 1997 fishery is challenging, since it comes at a time when stock expansion in the coastal migratory population is relatively slow, while growth in the estuarine size classes is extremely fast. This is because relatively few juvenile fish were spawned in the 1970's and early 1980's, which now makes the big 10-25 year olds in the ocean population relatively scarce. Conversely, extremely abundant year classes of fish were spawned in the last several years, with 40-year highs seen in the Chesapeake Bay juvenile abundance surveys. These abundant young fish will be growing into the 18 inch minimum size class fished in the Chesapeake Bay area in 1997.

During the summer of 1996, the ASMFC Striped Bass Technical Committee formulated 1997 commercial quotas and recreational regulations for the Board's consideration. At the September 1996 Management Board meeting, the Technical Committee reported that the coastal (ocean) commercial quotas were projected to fall from 1996 levels by about 500,000 pounds overall to stay at the 28% mortality rate. This is due in part to the sensitivity of the method used to formulate quotas. The method calculates quotas based on information from the harvest and associated fishing mortality rates from 1994 (the last year of complete fishing mortality information available), the relative changes in total pounds of Chesapeake Bay striped bass available to the fishery since 1994, and the targeted fishing rate for 1997.

The resulting quota is very sensitive to changes in the fishing mortality rate between the reference year (1994) and the targeted 1997 mortality rate as well as the relative change in biomass. As a result of slow expansion in the exploitable biomass along the coast and a slight increase in mortality in 1994, the projected 1997 commercial quotas were lower than the 1996 values (which were based on a lower daily, 28" minimum size), which do not consider annual changes in stock abundance would stay the same in 1997.

The Committee also reported that the Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions could see a temporary increase in their commercial allocation of striped bass. This is primarily because of the large influx of 1993 year class fish into those states' 18 inch size limit range, accommodating a larger harvest next year while staying below the target mortality rate. The recreational seasons in the Chesapeake states, using the standard Amendment 5 calculations, were projected to offset a slight increase in mortality.

This complex situation led the Management Board to consider a freeze on all 1996 regulations through 1997. Some states, like those in the Chesapeake Bay region, didn't prefer this option because they submitted alternative management proposals (which are allowed under Amendment 5) to maintain consistency in their sport and commercial allocations while harvesting to more abundant 18-inch fish in 1997.

In order to address this complex situation, the ASMFC Striped Bass Management Board voted to freeze all 1997 commercial and recreational striped bass regulations at 1996 levels (see Sections 4.2 and 4.3 in Amendment 5), but permit states to submit alternative proposals under Section 4.4 of Amendment 5. Section 4.4 permits the implementation of alternative proposals from states as long as they are demonstrated to be conservationally equivalent to the minimum standards in the fishery management plan. States may begin implementing these regulations, and alternative proposals, after January 22, 1997.

## **MANAGEMENT PROGRAM SPECIFICATIONS 1997 STRIPED BASS FISHERIES**

For a detailed description of the 1996 fishery regulations, reporting requirements, and other compliance measures that are applicable under Amendment 5 and this addendum, readers should refer to *Fisheries Management Report No. 24 of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission: Amendment 5 to the Interstate Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass*.

### **Recreational Fisheries**

*Preferred Alternative:* 20-inch minimum size in producer areas, 28-inch minimum size in coastal areas. Creel limits for the interim fishery ( $F=0.33$ ) are: two fish creel limit along the coast and a one fish creel limit in producer areas (except as noted in Tables 3-5 in Amendment 5). Interim fishing season lengths are variable between producer areas (Tables 3-4 in Amendment 5), while a 365-day season is allowed in coastal areas. Management measures for the Hudson River are still under development: until they are finalized, New York and New Jersey may implement a 28-inch minimum size and two fish creel limit (18 inch minimum size and one fish creel allowed above the George Washington Bridge).

### **Commercial Fisheries**

In order to achieve fishing mortality targets, commercial fisheries will be constrained by a size limit and a state-by-state quota. Producer area jurisdictions are strongly discouraged from establishing commercial fisheries on spawning grounds during striped bass spawning season.

*Preferred Alternative:* 20-inch minimum size in producer areas, 28-inch minimum size in coastal areas. In addition, commercial fisheries in each state will be limited to a flexible statewide quota as specified for 1996 in Tables 6 and 7 in Amendment 5 for the interim fishery ( $F=0.33$ ). In the event that a state exceeds its quota, the amount of the excess must be deducted from the state's allowable quota for the following year.

### **Alternative State Management Regimes**

A state may, with the approval of the Management Board vary their regulatory specifications contained in Sections 4.2 and 4.3 of Amendment 5, so long as that state can show to the Board's satisfaction that the target fishing mortality rate (see Section 3.3 of Amendment 5) will not be exceeded. Alternative management regimes may also include other indices of their equivalency (e.g., eggs-per-recruit), in addition to target fishing mortality rate protection. Under no circumstances will states be allowed to institute minimum sizes below 18 inches in alternative management regimes. See Section 4.4.1 in Amendment 5 for procedures for submitting alternative state fishing proposals.