



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

October 22, 2014

To: Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board
From: Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel
RE: Advisory Panel Recommendations on Draft Addendum IV

The Advisory Panel (AP) met in person on October 15, 2014 in Linthicum, Maryland to comment on Draft Addendum IV to Amendment 6. Below is a summary of their meeting.

Attendees

Arnold Leo (NY) commercial
Leonard Voss JR. (DE) commercial
Kelly Place (VA) commercial
Riley Williams (NC) commercial
David Pecci (ME) charter boat
Ed O'Brien (MD) charter boat
Al Ristori (NJ) charter
Peter Whelan (NH) charter/recreational

Kyle Douton (CT) charter/recreational
John McMurray (NY) charter/recreational
Louis Bassano (NJ) recreational
John Pedrick (PA) recreational
Ed Cook (RI) recreational
Bill Hall (VA) recreational
Rodney Gray (ME) recreational
Staff
Mike Waine, FMP Coordinator

2.5.1 Coastwide Population Reference Point Options

- Recreational and charter boat representatives preferred option B, adoption of the new proposed reference points. Specific comments included:
 - It represents the best available science, and it is the TC recommendation.
 - There is only a 50% chance of achieving proposed F target with any option.
 - Action should be taken, the downtrend in SSB is clear and we need to reduce F.
 - Need to move towards something that is more conservative. There are fishermen that are unable to catch their quotas because there is not enough fish around.
- Commercial representatives preferred option A, status quo. Specific comments included:
 - There are two sources of conservative bias (ageing error, and retrospective bias) that make the downward trend in SSB questionable.
 - The assessment is flawed so don't impact industry without more reliable data.
 - We have had less conservative reference points that rebuilt this stock just fine.
 - There are predation concerns on menhaden, weakfish, and others if the striped bass population increases.
 - We are at the threshold, and with the juvenile recruitment that has been increasing over the last couple years will result in more SSB in future years.

2.5.2 Chesapeake Bay Stock Reference Point Options

- There was some support for option A, status quo. Specific comments included:
 - The coastwide reference points will dramatically reduce the Chesapeake Bay (CB) quota more than the coast will be reduced.
 - CB reference points have been successfully used for a couple decades.

- Should not manage CB with a model that has a retrospective bias and does not incorporate the sex ratio from the CB (predominately male).
- It's premature to take harvest reduction before CB reference points are developed.
- The reduction proposed in the CB using the coastwide reference points is too high.
- There was some support for Option B. Specific comments included,
 - It is the best available science right now.
 - It is consistent with a stated goal of Draft Addendum IV (i.e., reducing fishing mortality on striped bass)

2.5.3 Albemarle Sound/Roanoke River Stock Reference Point Options

- The AP was satisfied with option B. Specific comments included:
 - North Carolina will be managing the A/R stock with a reduction to the quota.
 - The striped bass fishery is controlled as a bycatch fishery in Albemarle Sound and they have not caught the quota for many years.

2.6 Timeline to Reduce F to the Target

- Some members were in support of option A, do not change the management trigger to allow for a three year timeframe. Specific comments included:
 - Recreational sector is not seeing the striped bass numbers.
 - There has been enough delay already, take significant action now as required in Amendment 6. There is a cost to delaying action.
 - We should be responsible in managing to the target SSB levels.
 - There is a 50% chance of achieving the F target, and this has been an issue for a long time. Board has so many excuses for over 10 years when it comes to taking action.
 - It is troubling that disease may be creating an issue and we should control harvest.
 - There are lessons to be learned from codfish and with a 50% chance we should do it in one year.
 - SSB is going to decline a few more years before it increases even with the reductions.
 - It's easier to formulate business plans with the one year reduction. The action in terms of abundance is more important than the pounds.
 - The law enforcement is in favor of the one year timeframe because it is very challenging to educate and enforce a multi-year approach.
 - Striped bass is a public resource and it should be managed as such.
- Some members were in support of option B. Specific comments included:
 - NY commercial and for hire has had sensational good year with plenty of large bass and commercial fishery is catching quotas.
 - The assessment that is indicating a reduction is needed is based on flawed data.
 - A three year timeframe will reduce economic impacts to the industry.
 - The three year approach gives good flexibility.
 - We are not in an alarming situation, fish are in the EEZ.
 - We could easily adjust the management trigger and still achieve the goal.
 - It would be nice to get fish on the ends of the range and economically it is good for everyone and that can still be achieved in three years.

3.0 Proposed Management Program

Option A: Status Quo No comments.

Option B: Reduce F to the target within one year with a 25% harvest reduction

Coastal Recreational Fishery Comments

- A representative supported B1 for the recreational fishery and B7 for the charter to allow 2 fish.
- Multiple were in support of option B3. Specific comments included:
 - It is the most conservative option and we don't know the extent of poaching and all the options only have 50% of achieving F target.
 - Think about the economic impacts to the hotels, tackle stores, and other business that benefit from increased striped bass abundance.
 - Multiple charter boat representative support the most conservative option. Would rather provide a good experience than fish in the cooler.
- In contrast, a charter boat representative favored option B7 because charter boats want two fish, and this option still achieves the necessary reduction.
- Recreational harvest should be reduced by 25% and each state should be cut by that amount. Allow states to implement which option they want after working with their fisheries.
 - In contrast, an AP member cautioned that anglers from CT fish three different state's waters and so keeping the regulations equivalent across states is very important.
 - Similarly there is concern that conservation equivalency approaches that have slightly varying reductions will be exploited by neighboring states.
- When you increase the minimum size there is just going to be unnecessary discards that occur.

Option C: Reduce F to the target within three years with a 17% harvest reduction

- An AP member noted this option violates the current management trigger in Amendment 6.
- An AP member noted the three year timeframe may help with the current carrying capacity issue that is happening in the Chesapeake Bay.
 - There may be a trophic collapse if striped bass abundance increases and there is not enough food to feed them all.
 - Also, decreased nutrition from competition may cause mycobacteriosis to become a major issue.

Option D: Reduce F to the target within three years with an incremental 7+7+7% harvest reduction

- An AP member noted a 7% reduction does not achieve much and the reduction seems insignificant. It is the least conservative and most risky.
- Charter for hire representative prefers option D1. Specific comments included:
 - It is necessary to have a two fish bag limit and a gradual increase in the size limit.
- An AP member was in support of option D2.
 - It allows for a trophy fish to be caught.
- AP member commented that catch and release mortality from raising the size limit is going to result in significant mortality (e.g., charters will stay until they catch their limit).
- There are a lot of little fish in the Bay and they are not just from the 2011 year class so increasing the size would result in a lot of catch and release mortality.

- There was concern about the lower income anglers that fish from piers and bridges and a higher size limit may limit their ability to harvest fish.
- No other jurisdictions took reductions in 2013, but the Bay quota was reduced by 14%. So the Bay should not be punished for their conservative management approaches and reductions should be based on 2012 harvest not 2013.
- Multiple AP members supported option D6 because it reduces the impact on the commercial fishery. In 2017 we may see positive impact in SSB anyways from the strong 2011 year class.

3.1 Commercial Quota Transfer

- Recreational representatives were in support of option A because the purpose of addendum is to reduce F and transferring unused commercial quota would likely increase mortality.
 - It is not fair to states that only have recreational fisheries to allow commercial fisheries to transfer quota.
- Commercial representative supported option B because it provides management flexibility.
 - Quota transfer works well for bluefish. Allow flexibility, but it doesn't necessarily have to get used.
 - The stock can sustain the harvest allowed by the quota level so transferring doesn't put increased pressure on the resource.

3.2 Commercial Size Limits

- Commercial representatives were in support of option B. Commercial fishermen use nets with a set mesh size and changing mesh size becomes more burdensome to the industry.
 - The more flexibility in management the more it is able to deal with realities.
 - There would be dead discards if the commercial size limit changed.
 - Bycatch mortality can be minimized if you allow that harvest until the quota is caught and then be done. States have fine-tuned their fishing to minimize bycatch mortality.

General Comments

- All reductions need to be based on the same 2013 harvest numbers and the fishery should be managed with a common denominator.
- The management board should consider triggers to revert back to similar regulations as we have now.