



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board
FROM: Max Appelman, FMP Coordinator
DATE: April 28, 2020
SUBJECT: Next Steps for Management

Prior to the change in the ASMFC's Spring Meeting from an in-person meeting to a webinar due to the impacts of COVID-19, the Atlantic Striped Bass Board (Board) was to consider two postponed motions. These motions consider (1) accountability measures for Addendum VI (i.e., if a state does not hit its predicted target reduction in 2020) and (2) initiating an Amendment to revisit and address several management issues including fishery goals and objectives, reference points, management triggers, stock rebuilding, area-specific management, and commercial allocation. Additionally, during Addendum VI deliberation in February, the Board also expressed intent to revisit the conservation equivalency provision and to pursue accountability measures for recreational striped bass fisheries in the future. Delaying discussion and action on these motions would not have an impact on implementation of possible actions, therefore leadership decided to further postpone these motions until the August meeting.

Leadership has recommended the Board form a work group of Board members to further explore these, and any other management issues identified by the Board, and to develop recommendations for Board consideration. This would allow work to continue on these important issues without excluding any ideas and to allow for transparency in addressing ongoing management issues to the extent practical during these challenging times. In August, the Board will review recommendations from the work group and discuss the postponed motions.

With implementation of Addendum VI, the Board took swift action to address overfishing status as soon as possible, and begin stock rebuilding. The following Technical Committee report reviews the status of 2020 state regulations, and the predicted total removals in 2020 based on these measures as tasked by the Board.

Impact of Conservation Equivalency Measures on Predicted Removals of Striped Bass in 2020
Report from the Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee to the Atlantic Striped Bass Board
April 28, 2020

In order to reduce fishing mortality (F) on Atlantic striped bass to the F target in 2020, the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board implemented Addendum VI to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Addendum changed commercial and recreational measures in order to reduce total removals of striped bass by 18% from 2017. This 18% reduction from 2017 removals was projected to have a 50% chance of reducing F in 2020 to the F target or lower. Several states applied to use conservation equivalency (CE) to implement different measures, as permitted under the FMP. States that applied for CE had to show their measures would result in an 18% or greater reduction in total removals at the state level, relative to 2017.

However, the predicted 18% reduction in total removals was calculated assuming all states would implement consistent measures for the ocean and Chesapeake Bay. With different measures implemented in different states, the total overall predicted reduction would likely differ from the 18% originally calculated for the coastwide measure.

Therefore, the Board tasked the Striped Bass Technical Committee (TC) with calculating the predicted percent reduction in 2020 based on final 2020 state measures, including CE measures.

The TC calculated the measures implemented in 2020 (Table 1 and 2) would, on paper, result in a 15% reduction, compared to the 18% reduction calculated for consistent coastwide measures. The probability that F in 2020 will be at or below the F target was projected to be 42%, compared to 50% for the consistent coastwide measures. The 95% confidence intervals of the updated projected 2020 F did include the F target, as did the previous projections for consistent coastwide removals. The updated projections also included preliminary recreational removals for 2019, which were lower than the 3-year average of removals used in the original projections, as well as updated data for 2018. Overall, this analysis showed that the combination of Addendum VI and approved CE measures implemented in 2020 would result in a slightly lower overall predicted reduction in total removals, and thus a slightly lower chance of achieving the F target in 2020 than predicted for the consistent coastwide measures. Overall, however, the implementation of CE measures did not significantly undermine the Board's efforts to end overfishing and reduce F to the F target in 2020.

However, the TC stresses that these calculations are done with the assumption that fishing effort and fish availability will be similar to 2016-2017. Removals in 2018 and 2019 were significantly lower than 2017, even under the same regulations, which is always a source of uncertainty in recreational bag and size limit analyses. More importantly, the impact of COVID-19 on total removals in 2020 cannot be predicted.

Table 1. Recreational measures for 2020 by state and region.

Mode/Region	Size Limit	Bag Limit	Open Season	Other
Maine				
All	28" to < 35"	1	All Year	
New Hampshire				
All	28" to < 35"	1	All Year	
Massachusetts				
All	28" to < 35"	1	All Year	
Rhode Island				
All	28" to < 35"	1	All Year	
Connecticut				
All	28" to < 35"	1	All Year	
New York				
New York - Ocean				
All	28" to <= 35"	1	4.15 - 12.15	% reduction accounts for HR/DR removals
New York - Hudson River				
Hudson River	18" to <= 28"	1	4.1 - 11.30	North of George Washington Bridge (RM 12)
New York - Delaware River				
DE River	28" to <= 35"	1	All Year	
New Jersey				
All	28" to < 38"	1	All Year	Closed 1.1 - 2.28 (except in Atlantic Ocean) and 4.1 - 5.31 in the lower DE River and tribs
Bonus Program	24" to < 28"	1	5.15 - 12.31	1 fish/permit until quota reached (215,912 pounds)
Pennsylvania - Delaware River and Estuary				
DE River & Estuary	28" to < 35"	1	1.1 - 3.31, 6.1 - 12.31	PA State Line upstream to Calhoun St. Bridge
Spring	21" to < 24"	2	4.1 - 5.31	
Non-Tidal	28" to < 35"	1	All year	From Calhoun St. Bridge upstream
Delaware				
Delaware - Ocean				
Ocean	28" to <= 35"	1	1.1 - 6.30, 9.1 - 12.31	C&R on spawning grounds 4.1 - 5.31. DNREC to change measures to prohibit retention of fish measuring 35" exactly.
Delaware (Bay, River and Tribs)				
DE Bay + Tributaries	20" to <= 25"	1	7.1 - 8.31	

Table 1 (continued).

Mode/Region	Size Limit	Bag Limit	Open Season	Other
Maryland				
Maryland - Ocean				
Ocean, All	28" to < 35"	1	All Year	
Maryland - Chesapeake Bay				
All (Spring)	35"	1	5.1 - 5.15	Direct targeting prohibited 4.1 - 4.30 and 8.16 - 8.31; charter captains cannot keep fish for personal consumption
Private/Shore	19" min	1	5.16 - 8.15, 9.1 - 12.10	
For-hire	19" min (1 fish can be > 28")	2		
District of Columbia				
All	18" min	1	5.16 - 12.31	
Potomac River Fisheries Commission				
Spring	35" min	1	5.1 - 5.15	Downstream of Rt. 301 bridge
Summer/Fall	20" min	2	5.16 - 7.6, 8.21 - 12.31	Direct targeting prohibited 7.7 - 8.20
Virginia				
Virginia - Chesapeake Bay				
Spring/Summer	20" to <= 28"	1	5.16 - 6.15	
Fall	20" to <= 36"	1	10.4 - 12.31	Additional permit for 1 fish >36"/person/year
Virginia - Ocean				
Ocean	28" to <= 36"	1	1.1 - 3.31, 5.16 - 12.31	Additional permit for 1 fish >36"/person/year
North Carolina				
Ocean	28" to < 35"	1	All Year	

Table 2. Commercial measures for 2020 by state and region.

Quota (pounds)	Size Limit	Other
Ocean		
Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia		
No commercial fishery, no reallocation of commercial quota		
Massachusetts		
735,240	35" min	SPR-based CE
Rhode Island		
148,889	34" min (GC), 26" min (FFT)	61:39 (GC:FFT)
New York		
640,718	26" to < 38"	SPR-based CE
New Jersey (no commercial fishery; reallocate quota to recreational bonus program)		
215,912	24" to < 28"	1 fish/permit
Delaware		
142,474	28" min (20" Spring GN)	
Maryland		
89,094	24" min	
Virginia		
125,034	28" min	
North Carolina		
295,495	28" min	
Chesapeake Bay		
Maryland		
1,445,394	18" to < 36"	
Potomac River Fisheries Commission		
572,861	18" min	36" max, 2.15-3.25
Virginia		
983,393	18" min	28" max, 3.15-6.15

** Refer to state implementation plans for more detail regarding proposed open seasons, permitting/allocation, and gear restrictions

Table 3: Predicted striped bass removals for 2020 under final Addendum VI regulations, including CE measures.

Sector	2020 Predicted Removals (Numbers of fish)
Commercial Harvest*	584,949
Commercial Discards	101,067
Recreational**	5,335,296
Total	6,021,312
% Reduction from 2017	-15%

* Assuming quota utilization in 2020 = utilization in 2017

** Includes harvest and dead releases for recreational sector

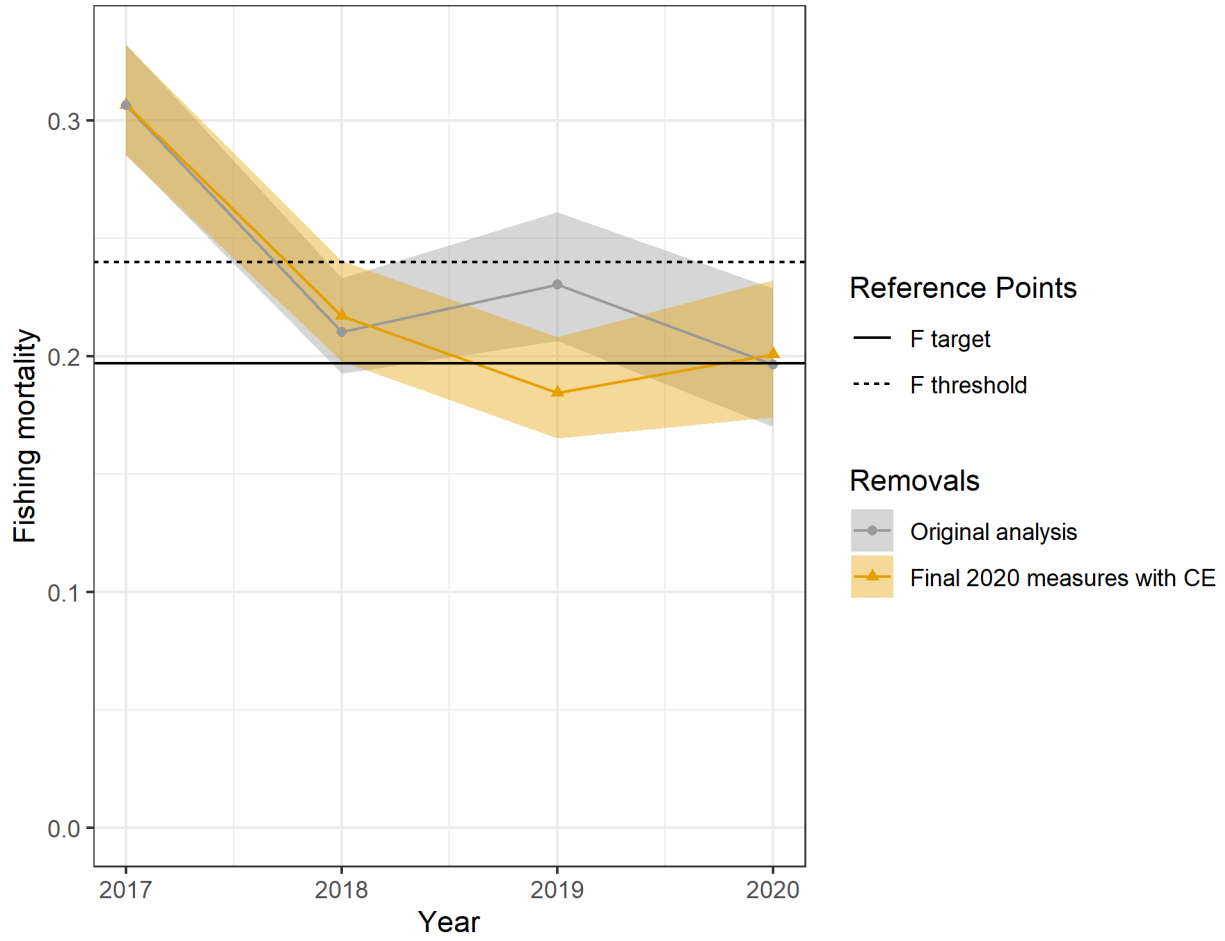


Figure 1. Projected striped bass F rates based on estimated removals from the original projections analysis conducted to inform the development of Addendum VI (coastwide measures), and the updated projections with final 2020 state measures including approved conservation equivalency. The updated projections also include updated 2018 and preliminary 2019 recreational removals, which were not available for the original projections. The shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals of the projections.

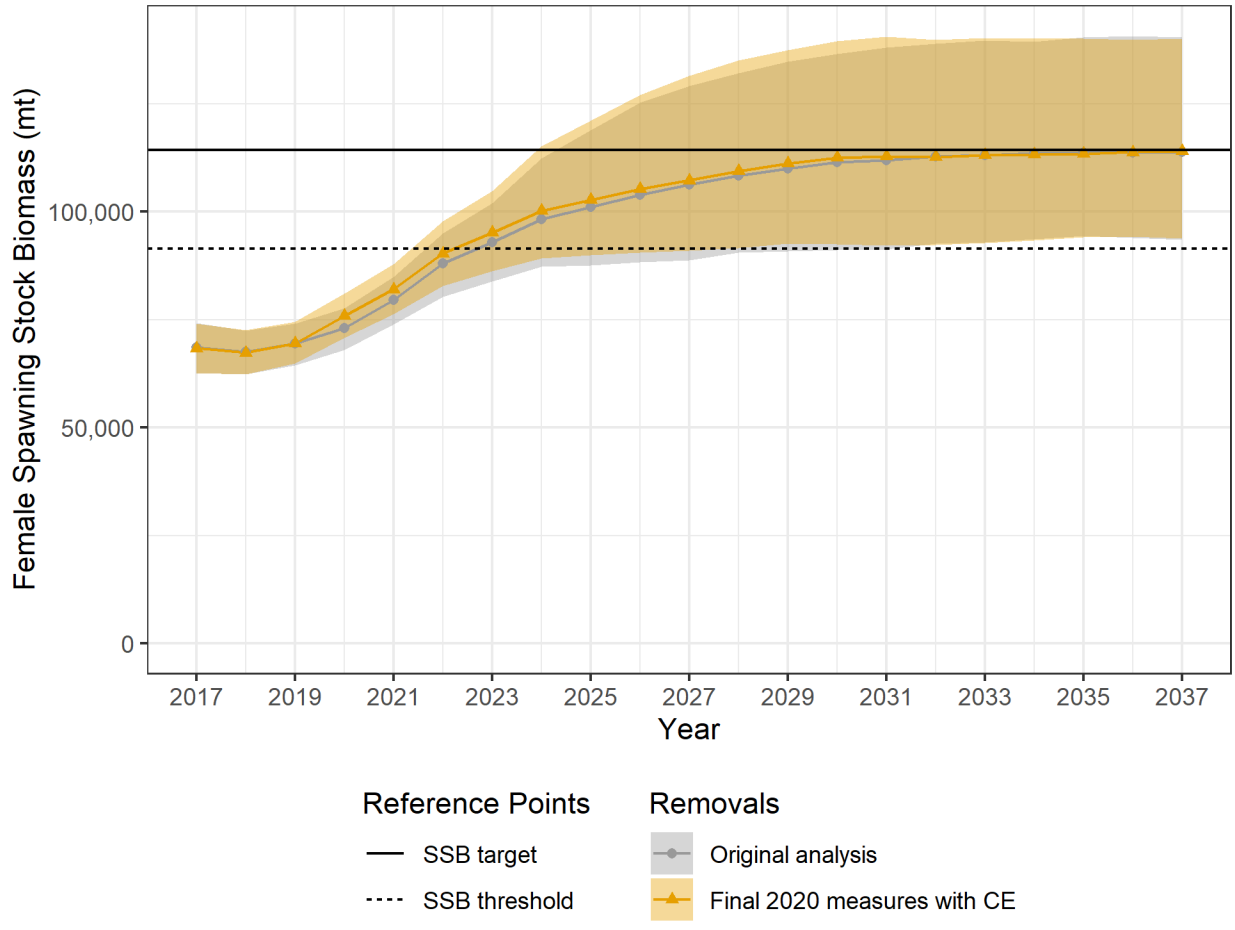


Figure 2. Projected striped bass female spawning stock biomass based on estimated removals from the original projections analysis conducted to inform the development of Addendum VI (coastwide measures), and updated projections with final 2020 state measures including approved conservation equivalency. The updated projections also include updated 2018 and preliminary 2019 recreational removals, which were not available for the original analysis. The shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals of the projections.