



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations of all Atlantic coast fish species, or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015

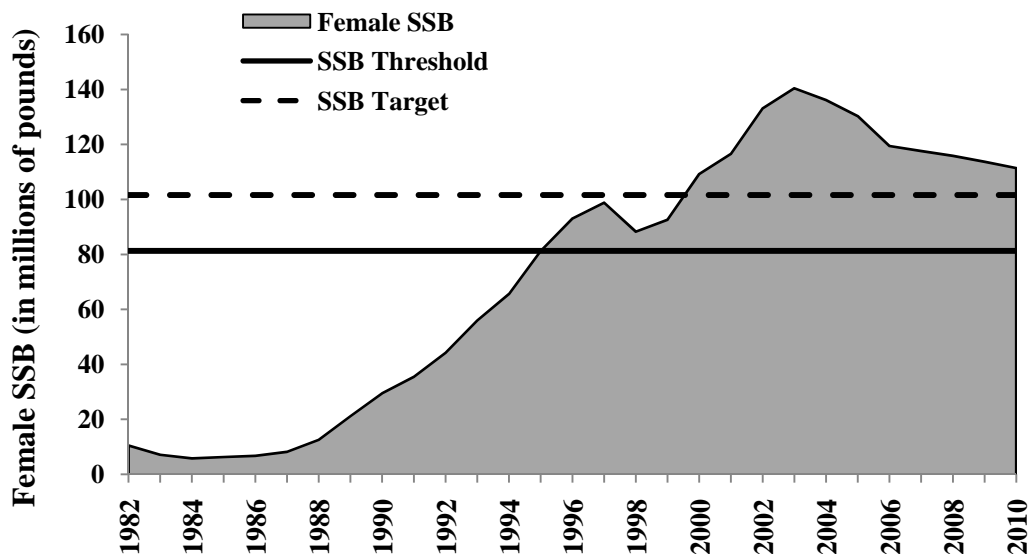
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 10, 2011

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

Atlantic Striped Bass Assessment Update Finds Resource Not Overfished and Overfishing Not Occurring

Boston, MA – The 2011 Atlantic striped stock assessment update indicates that the resource remains in good condition with the female spawning stock biomass (SSB) estimate at 109% of the SSB target and 137% of the SSB threshold (see Figure 1). The estimated fishing mortality rate (F) in 2010 was 0.23, below both the target (0.30) and threshold (0.34). Striped bass are assessed as a single stock although there are at least three distinct stocks contributing to the coastal migratory group: Hudson River, Delaware River, and Chesapeake Bay and tributaries. The striped bass stock complex is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

Figure 1. Atlantic Striped Female Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB)
Source: ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update, 2011



Overall stock abundance has declined since 2004, which is reflected by a decline in coastwide landings in 2009 and 2010. The decline is more prevalent in areas largely dependent on contributions from the Chesapeake stocks (such as Maine) than areas that are dominated by the Hudson stock (such as New York).

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

Despite the decline in abundance, the spawning stock in 2010 remained relatively high due to the growth and maturation of the 2003 year class and the accumulation of spawning biomass from year classes prior to 1996. Analysis of tagging data suggests increasing natural mortality in Chesapeake Bay, possibly the result of mycobacteriosis. However, a recent tagging study by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science suggests the impact of mycobacteriosis may not be as significant as once thought.

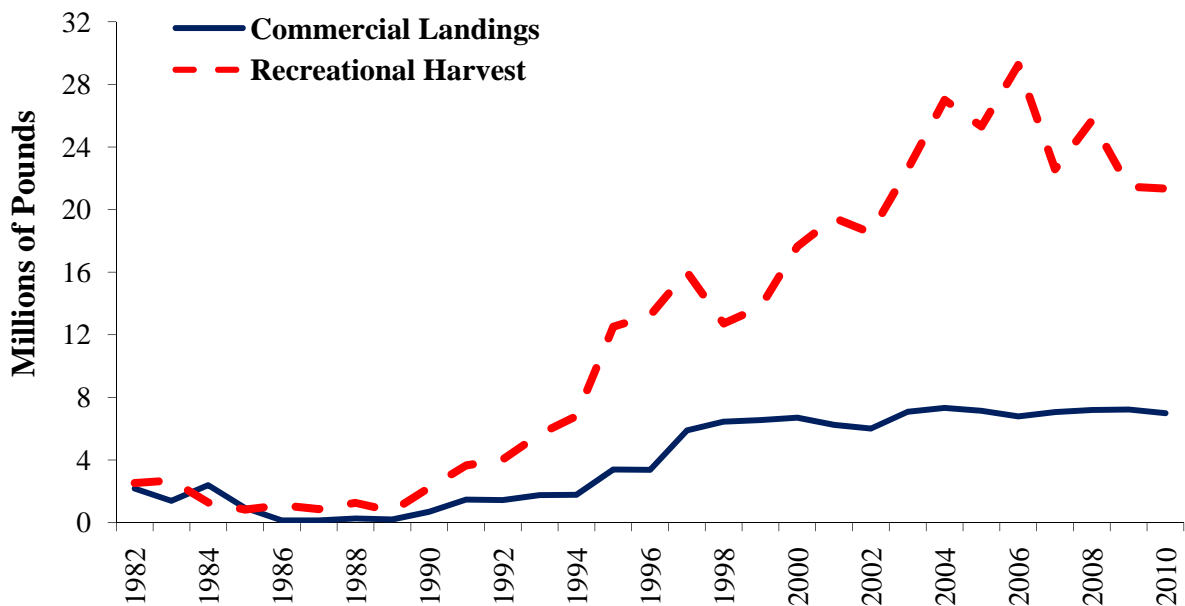
Recruitment estimates averaged 9.5 million fish from 1982 through 2010. However, the stock assessment update identified a period of increased recruitment from 1994-2004 and a more recent (2005-2010) period of lower recruitment. Recruitment in 2009 and 2010 was estimated at 7.1 and 9.1 million fish, respectively. The 2003 year class remains the largest since 1982 at 20.8 million fish.

Striped bass are one of the most sought after species by recreational anglers along the Atlantic coast. Recreational landings have ranged from a low of under 750,000 pounds in 1989 to a high of 30.5 million pounds in 2006. In 2010, recreational anglers landed over 22.9 million pounds (1.99 million fish) (see Figure 2). This represents a 24% decline by weight and a 26% decline by number from the high in 2006. Changes in landings have varied by state, with Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey showing an increase in number of fish landed and the remaining states showing a 45% decrease on average. Recreational discard mortalities (assuming an 8% mortality of releases) in 2010 were approximately 514,000 fish, a 75% decrease from a high of 2 million fish in 2006.

Landings from the commercial striped bass fishery have been consistently lower than the recreational catch. Commercial landings increased from ~139,000 pounds in 1987 to just under 5.9 million pounds in 1997 and have remained steady due to quota restrictions. Landings in 2010 were 7.06 million pounds. Gill nets are the dominant commercial gear used to target striped bass. Other commercial fishing gears include hook and line, pound nets, seines, and trawls.

Figure 2. Atlantic Striped Bass Commercial & Recreational Landings

Source: ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update, 2011



Copies of the stock assessment update will be available via the Commission’s website at www.asmfc.org under “Breaking News.” For more information, please contact Kate Taylor, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 703.842.0741 or ktaylor@asmfc.org.