

2000 REVIEW OF THE  
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION  
FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR  
**ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS**  
*(Morone saxatilis)*

Prepared by

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FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS  
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**I. Status of the Fishery Management Plan**

Date of FMP Approval: Original FMP: October, 1981  
Amendment 5 (active): March, 1995

Management Unit: Migratory stocks of Atlantic striped bass from Maine through North Carolina

States With Declared Interest: Maine through North Carolina

List Of Active Boards/Committees: Striped Bass Management Board, Advisory Panel, Technical Committee, Stock Assessment Subcommittee, Tagging Workgroup, Plan Review Team, Plan Development Team

Jurisdictions with a declared interest in striped bass are from Maine through North Carolina, including Pennsylvania, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and the District of Columbia. Under the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act (P.L. 98-613), implementation of the FMP is mandatory. Implementation of the FMP is monitored by the Commission's Striped Bass Board (Board) and Striped Bass Plan Review Team (PRT).

Under Amendment 5 the standard minimum sizes for Atlantic striped bass are 20 inches in bays and estuaries (producer areas), and 28 inches along the coast. In coastal jurisdictions, standard recreational regulations are two fish per day and a 365 day fishing season. No annual harvest quotas or caps are mandated for the recreational fishery. Commercial fisheries are regulated through the same size limit standards as the recreational fishery, and quotas are allocated by percentage of coastwide reported commercial landings from 1972-1979.

States are granted flexibility to deviate from these standards upon review by the Striped Bass Technical Committee and Advisory Panel and approval by the Management Board. Alternative proposals must be "conservationally equivalent" to the management standards, which has resulted in a wide variety of regulations among states (see attached table).

These management measures are intended to maintain fishing mortality (F) at or below the target of  $F = 0.31$ . Since 1995, three addenda were approved to perpetuate the Amendment 5 standards from 1997 through 2000. Based on the 1999 stock assessment the Striped Bass Management Board developed Addendum IV to reduce fishing mortality on age 8 and older striped bass. Addendum IV detailed the changes that states would be required to make for 2000 and 2001 in order to achieve the necessary reduction. For 2000 many states implemented changes in their management programs to reduce mortality on the older striped bass by 14%. States that were already more conservative than the standards established in Amendment 5 were not required to make any reductions for 2000.

The 2000 stock assessment indicated that no additional reductions in fishing mortality are necessary on age 8 and older striped bass during 2001, and in fact the reductions achieved in 2000 may not have been needed. This information prompted the Management Board to initiate the development of Addendum V, which is slated for approval in November of 2000. Addendum V will establish the management standards for 2001 and possibly 2002 that the states will be required to achieve in order to be in compliance with the Fishery Management Plan. During 2001, and possibly 2002, the Management Board will complete Amendment 6 to the FMP to address long-term policy, management, and scientific issues.

The EEZ remains closed to striped bass harvest and possession by both commercial and recreational fishermen.

## **II. Status of the Stocks**

Stock abundance of Atlantic striped bass remained high in 1999, with estimated stock numbers of 36.2 million fish in 1999 and 33.8 million fish in 2000 (ages 1-15+). Recruitment in 1999 was near the time series average, and the estimated cohort size at age 1 (coastwide) was 6.3 million fish in 2000. Female spawning stock biomass decreased slightly from 1998 estimate of 19,309 mt to 18,087 mt in 1999, which is still considered a healthy and viable stock by the Striped Bass Technical Committee.

The Technical Committee did not recommend changes to the current target fishing mortality rate ( $F = 0.31$ ) and overfishing definition ( $F_{msy} = 0.38$ ). Fishing mortality rates in 1999 were not significantly higher than the target  $F$  rate for fully recruited age groups ( $F=0.32$  for ages 4-13). However, fishing effort continues to increase in the recreational sector. Fishing rates in 2000 may increase over 1999 values and may continue to slightly exceed the target rates. Therefore, the Technical Committee recommended that states maintain the status quo catch levels. Steady increases in the intensity of capture-to-encounter rate in recent years observed in both scientific and volunteer tagging studies, coupled with increased recreational trip estimates, indicate increased fishing pressure. This increase in effort may outstrip the gains associated with established size and possession limits and result in increased fishing mortality rates in the future.

The Roanoke River/Albemarle Sound (NC) stock of striped bass was declared recovered by the Management Board in October, 1997. This finding was based on the recommendation of the Technical Committee and assessment data compiled by the state of North Carolina. These data suggest that spawning stock biomass in the Albemarle/Roanoke system has recovered to historical levels observed in the 1960's, and indicate that regulatory relaxation is permissible in certain areas. North Carolina received approval to fish at higher target mortality levels (up to 0.28 at 18 inches minimum size) in 1998. The over fishing level of  $F$  remains at 0.38.

The Delaware River stock of striped bass has also been declared recovered relative to historical levels of spawning biomass. Addendum III formalizes the declaration of the recovery by the Management Board. The Delaware River stock, which is known to mix extensively with the Chesapeake Bay stock, within state waters of Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey have

been permitted to use the same target mortality rate established for the rest of the migratory stocks ( $F=0.31$ ) since the adoption of Amendment 5.

### **III. Status of the Fishery**

Total coastwide harvest and discard losses from recreational and commercial fisheries was estimated at 3,824,686 striped bass in 1999 and represents a 15% decrease in number from 1998. Estimates of discard losses equaled 36.3% of the total catch in 1999, compared to 42% in 1998. Total 1999 landings included 1.1 million fish (6.5 million pounds) from the commercial fishery and 1.33 million fish (19.7 million pounds) from recreational fisheries. Recreational landings increased by less than 1% and commercial landings decreased by 11% between 1998 and 1999. For 1999, recreational discard mortality (1.03 million fish) decreased by almost 50% from 1998 levels while commercial discard mortality levels increased from 0.30 million fish in 1998 to 0.36 million fish in 1999.

### **IV. Status of Research and Monitoring**

All jurisdictions with commercial fisheries (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, PRFC and North Carolina) are required to define the catch composition (age, length, sex) of these fisheries. Jurisdictions with significant commercial fisheries (Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, Virginia, and PRFC) are required to collect catch/effort data. Jurisdictions with significant recreational fisheries (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and PRFC) are required to follow specific guidelines for supplementing MRFSS collection catch composition data and catch/effort information from these fisheries.

Amendment 5 also required fishery independent monitoring programs in some states. Juvenile abundance indices are determined by Maine, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Spawning stock sampling is performed by New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Tagging is conducted by state and federal agencies to determine survivorship and migration patterns in the coastal migratory stock. The tagging is done by personnel in NMFS, USFWS and marine fisheries agencies in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.

### **V. Status of Management Measures**

In 1997 through present, Amendment 5 mandated a target mortality rate of 0.31. In order to achieve this target, the plan calls for a minimum size of 20 inches in bays and estuaries and 28 inches in ocean waters. Standard creel limits are generally 2 fish per day, and a 365 day season in coastal waters. As described in Section I, many states implemented management measures to achieve 14% reduction in fishing mortality on age 8 and older fish in 2000 relative to the standards listed above. The Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Bay, and Hudson River jurisdictions have slightly different recreational standards. States could vary their regulations yearly as long as the Technical Committee and Management Board accepted that a state's proposal was conservationally equivalent to the Amendment 5 guidelines.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) maintains a ban on striped bass fishing activity and possession of striped bass in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), with the exception of a defined route to and from Block Island in Rhode Island.

## **VI. Current state-by-state implementation of FMP compliance requirements as of November 21, 2000**

The FMP has several compliance requirements, which involve both the monitoring and regulatory aspects of state striped bass management programs (see above), and are enforceable through the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act.

Amendment 5 also dictated that states submit semi-annual law enforcement activity reports (which was changed to an annual report through Addendum IV). These reports, in a standardized format, detailed the effort and success involved in enforcing striped bass regulations in each jurisdiction. State compliance with the law enforcement reports is summarized in Table 1 under “Annual reporting”.

All states must submit an annual harvest report for the previous year by April 1. The report summarizes the activity and results of monitoring programs required by the FMP, the regulations in effect, and estimates of harvest/nonharvest losses. State compliance with reporting law enforcement activity, harvest, and monitoring results is summarized in Table 1 under “Annual reporting”.

## **VII. Recommendations**

1. Re-evaluate biological reference points and fishing mortality targets as they relate to stock characteristics and future definitions of quality fisheries.
2. Complete discussions over allocation, size limits, and other significant policy and management questions during 2001 (and possibly 2002) while completing Amendment 6 in 2001/2002.

**Status of compliance with monitoring and reporting requirements**  
**(Y = compliance standards met, N = compliance standards not met, N/A = not applicable)**

<b>State</b>	<b>Fishery-independent monitoring</b>	<b>Fishery-dependent monitoring</b>	<b>Annual reporting</b>
ME	Y	N/A	Y
NH	N/A	N/A	Y
MA	Y	Y	Y
RI	N/A	Y	Y
CT	N/A	Y	Y
NY	Y	Y	Y
NJ	Y	Y	Y
PA	Y	N/A	Y
DE	Y	Y	Y
MD	Y	Y	Y
PRFC	N/A	Y	Y
DC	N/A	Y	Y
VA	Y	Y	Y
NC	Y	Y	Y

## 2000 COMMERCIAL FISHERY REGULATIONS – ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS\*

\* All regulations are subject to change. Readers should contact their state fisheries offices for detailed regulations.

STATE	SIZE LIMITS	SEASONAL QUOTA (LB)	OPEN SEASON
Maine	No Fishery		
New Hampshire	No Fishery		
Massachusetts	34" minimum	802,000	July 3 until quota is reached
Rhode Island	24" min. (trap fishery) 36" min. (hook & line)	52,502 (trap) 81,390 (H & L)	1 June – July (3 fish, H&L) Aug. till quota reached (2 fish, H&L)
Connecticut	No Fishery		
New York	24" –36"	590,155	July 1 - Dec. 15
New Jersey	No Fishery	Bonus fishery of 225,000 lbs. from. Comm. cap	
Pennsylvania	No Fishery		
Delaware	20 – 32"	184,046 lb. (100 lb./day hook and line)	<b>Gillnet</b> 1 March – 30 April, 1 Dec. – 30 Dec. <b>Hook and Line</b> 1 Oct. – 31 Dec. <b>Spawning Grounds</b> 1 Jan. – 31 March 1 June – 31 December
Maryland	<b>Bay and Rivers</b> 18" – 36" <b>Ocean</b> 24"	<b>Bay and Rivers</b> 2,348,550 lb. (portion of 10,500,000 lb. baywide quota <b>Ocean</b> 91,000 lb.	<b>Bay Pound Net</b> 1 June – 30 Nov. <b>Bay Haul Seine</b> 7 June – 30 Nov. <b>Bay Hook and Line</b> 14 June – 30 Nov. <b>Bay Drift Gill Net</b> 1 Jan. – 28 Feb., 1 Dec. – 31 Dec. <b>Ocean</b> 1 Jan. – 30 April, Nov. 1 – 31 Dec.
PRFC	18 – 35"	883,850 lb. (portion of 10,500,000 lb. baywide quota)	Seasons for fyke nets, haul seines, gillnets, poundnets, and hook and line fisheries.
District of Columbia	No Fishery		
	<b>Bay and Rivers</b>	1,701,748 lb.	<b>Bay and Rivers</b>

Virginia	18" minimum 28" maximum from 26 March through June 15 <b>Ocean</b> 28" minimum	(portion of 10,500,000 lb. baywide quota)	1 Feb – 23 Dec. <b>Ocean</b> 1 Feb – 23 Dec.
North Carolina	<b>Albemarle Sound</b> 18" <b>Atlantic Ocean</b> 28"	<b>Albemarle Sd.</b> 225,000 <b>Atl. Ocean</b> 336,000	<b>Albemarle Sound</b> Spring and Fall Seasons <b>Atlantic Ocean</b> Seasons Based on Gear Type



**2000 RECREATIONAL FISHERY REGULATIONS – ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS\***

\* All regulations are subject to change. Readers should contact their state fisheries offices for detailed regulations.

STATE	SIZE LIMITS	DAILY BAG LIMIT	SEASONAL QUOTA (LB)	OPEN SEASON
Maine	20 – 26” 40” minimum	1 fish between 20” and 26” <u>OR</u> 1 fish above 40”	None	Catch and Release only spawning areas: May 1 – June 30
New Hampshire	32” minimum	1 fish	None	All year
Massachusetts	30” minimum	1 fish	None	All year
Rhode Island	29” minimum	2 fish	None	April 23 – Nov. 30
Connecticut	<b>Shore/Private Boats</b> 24 – 30”  40” minimum  <b>Party/Charter Boats</b> 29.5” minimum	1 fish between 24” and 30” <u>AND</u> 1 fish above 40”  2 fish	None	All year
New York	<b>Hudson River</b> 18” minimum  <b>Ocean and Delaware River</b> 28” minimum	<b>Hudson River</b> 1 fish <b>Ocean</b> 1 fish <b>Charter and Delaware River</b> 2 fish	None	<b>Hudson River</b> 15 Mar. - 30 Nov. <b>Ocean</b> 8 May – 15 Dec. <b>Delaware River</b> All year
New Jersey	24 – 28” 28” minimum  <b>Bonus Program</b> 28” minimum	1 fish between 24” and 28” <u>AND</u> 1 fish above 28”  <b>Bonus Program</b> 1/day in addition to regular fishery	Bonus program of 225,000 lbs. from commercial cap	All year, except <u>Delaware River spawning grounds</u> : 1 Jan – Mar 31 1 June -- 31 Dec <u>Other Rivers</u> : 1 Mar – 31 Dec.
Pennsylvania	28” minimum	2	None	<b>Non-Tidal</b> All year <b>Tidal Delaware River</b> March, 1 June – 31 Dec

Delaware	24 – 28” 28” minimum	1 fish between 24” and 28” <u>AND</u> 1 fish above 28”	None	All year, except <u>Delaware River</u> <u>spawning</u> <u>grounds:</u> 1 Jan – Mar 31 1 June -- 31 Dec.
Maryland	<b>Spring</b> 28” minimum <b>Summer/Fall</b> 18 – 28” 28” minimum <b>Ocean</b> 28” minimum	<b>Spring</b> 1 fish <b>Summer/Fall</b> 2 fish between 18” and 28” <u>OR</u> 1 fish between 18” and 28” <u>AND</u> 1 fish above 28” <b>Ocean</b> 2	<b>Spring</b> Portion of 30,000 fish cap <b>Summer/Fall</b> 3,177,450lb. (portion of 10,500,000 lb baywide quota) <b>Ocean</b> None	<b>Spring</b> Bay: 25 Apr. – 31 May Potomac tribs: 22 Apr. – 31 May <b>Summer/Fall</b> Bay: 1 Jun – 30 Nov Potomac tribs: 1 Jun – 31 Dec. <b>Ocean</b> All year
PRFC	<b>Spring</b> 28” minimum <b>Summer/Fall</b> 18” (28”)	<b>Spring</b> 1 <b>Summer/Fall</b> 2 fish, only one of which may be larger than 28”	<b>Spring</b> Portion of 30,000 fish cap <b>Summer/Fall</b> 723,150 lb. (portion of 10,500,000 lb baywide quota)	<b>Spring</b> Limited days From the last week of April through 31 May. <b>Summer/Fall</b> 1 June – 31 December
District of Columbia	18” Minimum 36” Maximum	1	None	3 June – 31 July 1 Sept. – 16 Nov.
Virginia	<b>Spring</b> 18 – 28” <b>Trophy</b> 32” minimum <b>Fall</b> 18” (34”) <b>Ocean</b> 28” (34”)	<b>Spring</b> 2 fish <b>Trophy</b> 1 fish <b>Fall</b> 2 fish, only one of which may be larger than 34” <b>Ocean</b> 2 fish, only one of which may be larger than 34”	<b>Trophy</b> Portion of 30,000 fish cap <b>Spring/Fall</b> 1,701,748 lb. (portion of 10,500,000 lb baywide quota) <b>Ocean</b> None	<b>Spring</b> 16 May – 15 June <b>Trophy</b> 1 May – 15 May <b>Fall</b> 4 Oct. – 31 Dec. <b>Ocean</b> 1 Jan – 31 Mar 16 May – 31 Dec

North Carolina	<p><b>Roanoke River</b> 18" Minimum, but no fish between 22 and 27" in April and May</p> <p><b>Sounds and Rivers</b> 18" minimum</p> <p><b>Atlantic Ocean</b> 28" minimum</p>	<p><b>Rivers</b> 3 fish</p> <p><b>Albemarle Sound</b> 2 fish</p> <p><b>Atlantic Ocean</b> 2 fish</p>	<p><b>Roanoke Riv.</b> 112,500</p> <p><b>Albemarle Sd</b> 56,250 spring 56,250 fall</p> <p><b>Other Areas</b> None</p> <p><b>Atl. Ocean</b> None</p>	<p><b>Roanoke River</b> Tues., Wed., Sat., Sun. from 15 Mar</p> <p><b>Other areas</b> All year</p> <p><b>Albemarle Sd.</b> Wed., Fri., Sat., Sun. from 1 Jan</p> <p><b>Atlantic Ocean</b> 1 Jan. – 1 March 1 May – 31 Dec.</p>
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