



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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Atlantic Striped Bass Assessment Update Finds Resource No Longer Experiencing Overfishing but Remains Overfished

***Board Approves Draft Addendum I for Public Comment
to Consider Voluntary Commercial Quota Transfers***

Long Branch, NJ – The Commission’s Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board reviewed the results of the 2022 Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update, which indicates the resource is no longer experiencing overfishing but remains overfished relative to the updated biological reference points. Female spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 2021 was estimated at 143 million pounds, which is below the SSB threshold of 188 million pounds and below the SSB target of 235 million pounds. Total fishing mortality in 2021 was estimated at 0.14, which is below the updated fishing mortality threshold of 0.20 and below the updated fishing mortality target of 0.17.

The 2022 Assessment Update used the same model from the approved peer-reviewed 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment. Data through 2021 were added to the model, and the model structure was adjusted for 2020-2021 to account for the regulation changes implemented through Addendum VI to Amendment 6. The assessment model was able to handle missing data due to COVID-19, but overall, COVID-19 increased uncertainty in the 2020 and 2021 data.

The 2022 Assessment Update also included short-term projections to determine the probability of SSB being at or above the SSB target by 2029, which is the stock rebuilding deadline. Under the current fishing mortality rate, there is a 78.6% chance the stock will be rebuilt by 2029, indicating a reduction in catch is not necessary at this time. The projections and the updated fishing mortality reference points took into account the period of low recruitment the stock has experienced in recent years.

“This 2022 assessment was the first check-in point for progress toward stock rebuilding by 2029,” said Board Chair Marty Gary with the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. “It is extremely important that we continue to monitor fishery removals and conduct regular stock assessments to keep evaluating rebuilding progress and stay on track.” The next stock assessment update is scheduled for 2024, and the Board will review the 2022 removals as soon as the data are available to evaluate whether catch remains at sustainable levels.

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 diadromous species.

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The Assessment Update will be available next week on the Commission's website at <http://www.asmfc.org/species/atlantic-striped-bass> under Stock Assessment Reports. An overview of the assessment is available at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/636967f9AtlStripedBassStockAssessmentOverview_2022.pdf.

Draft Addendum I

The Board also approved Draft Addendum I to Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers allowing for the voluntary transfer of striped bass commercial quota in the ocean region between states that have ocean quota.

The Board initiated Draft Addendum I in August 2021 after deciding that changes to the striped bass commercial quota system would not be considered during the ongoing development of Amendment 7. With the adoption of Amendment earlier this year, the Board re-initiated discussions on, and ultimately approved, Draft Addendum I for public comment to consider voluntary quota transfers which could provide some relief to states seeking additional quota. The Draft Addendum proposes a range of options that would permit voluntary transfers of commercial quota, including options based on stock status and options allowing the Board to set criteria for transfers on a regular basis.

The Draft Addendum will be posted to the website next week at <http://www.asmfc.org/about-us/public-input>. A subsequent press release will provide the details on the public hearing schedule and how to submit written comments. The Board will meet to review submitted comment and consider final action on the addendum in February 2023 at the Commission's Winter Meeting in Arlington, VA.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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