



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

FROM: Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel

DATE: January 16, 2024

SUBJECT: Advisory Panel Recommendations on Draft Addendum II Options

The Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel (AP) met via webinar on January 11, 2024 to discuss AP recommendations on the proposed options in Striped Bass Draft Addendum II to Amendment 7, and to review New Jersey's conservation equivalency proposal. ASMFC staff provided the AP with an overview of the draft addendum background, proposed options, and a summary of public hearing comments. The following is a summary of AP members' recommended options and rationale.

AP Members in Attendance

Louis Bassano (Chair, NJ recreational)	Bob Danielson (NY recreational)
Bob Humphrey (ME for-hire)	Eleanor Bochenek (NJ rec, fisheries scientist)
Peter Whelan (NH recreational)	Leonard Voss (DE commercial)
Patrick Paquette (MA recreational)	Charles (Eddie) Green (MD for-hire/rec)
Craig Poosikian (MA commercial)	Dennis Fleming (PRFC rec/processor/dealer)
Andy Dangelo (RI for-hire)	Bill Hall (VA recreational)
Toby Lapinski (CT recreational)	Kelly Place (VA commercial)
Julie Evans (NY for-hire, commercial)	Jamie Lane (NC commercial)

ASMFC Staff: Emilie Franke

Public Attendees: Megan Ware (Striped Bass Board Chair, ME), Ray Kane (MA Board Member), Chris Batsavage (NC Board Member), Al Williams, Andrew M., Glen Fernandes, Mike Delzingo, Robert Moss, Taylor Vavra, Will Poston, Sarah Cvach (MDDNR), Daniel Herrick (MDDNR), Brendan Harrison (NJDEP)

Section 3.1.1 Ocean Recreational Fishery Options

1 AP member supports status quo Option A: 28" to <35" all modes for the following reasons:

- Too many fish are being released under the current narrow slot limit; need a wider slot.
- Can't fish for such a small size range. Need to take whatever is biting on a particular day.

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4 AP members support Option B: 28" to 31" all modes for the following reasons:

- This is the most conservative option and supports the rebuilding timeline.
- All recreational anglers should have the same fishing opportunity.
- Mode split creates division between sectors.
- There is no data justification for a mode split, and MRIP data are not designed to support such a split.
- The mode split options were developed without consideration of broader allocation. If a mode split were implemented, it would be extremely difficult to revert back to one mode in subsequent actions.
- Mode split deserves a more comprehensive, data-driven amendment-level discussion. Draft Addendum II includes very little analysis for the mode split options.
- All modes should work together to rebuild the stock.

8 AP members support Option C: 28" to 31" private-shore/28" to 33" for-hire for the following reasons:

- Wider slot would reduce discards on for-hire trips.
- Reducing fishing mortality is the primary goal, and this option is estimated to achieve about the same reduction as Option B.
- Allowing for-hire a wider slot does not impact the estimated reduction, and supports for-hire businesses. No reason not to support for-hire businesses.

Section 3.1.2 Chesapeake Bay Recreational Fishery Options

3 AP members support Option B1: 19" to 23"/1 fish all modes for the following reasons:

- Private-shore anglers face similar challenges to the for-hire fleet with short season and limited species available. All modes should have the same fishing opportunity.

1 AP members support Option B4: 19" to 26"/1 fish all modes noting that a wider slot is preferable to reduce discards.

1 AP member supports any of the B options (slot limit with 1 fish for all modes) noting that all modes should have the same bag limit, but defers to the Chesapeake Bay stakeholders on the slot size.

6 AP members support Option C1: 19" to 23"/1 fish private-shore/2 fish for-hire for the following reasons:

- For-hire businesses in the Chesapeake Bay need 2-fish to survive. Bay fish are much smaller than ocean fish and the season is already very short, so the 2-fish allowance is needed to attract customers.
- For-hire relies on striped bass to make a living. There are few other species available.
- For-hire vessels participate in electronic reporting to monitor their catch.
- 2-fish bag limit would help deter throwing back a fish on the smaller end of the slot in hopes of catching a larger one.

Section 3.1.3 For-Hire Management Clarification (if applicable)

4 AP members support the status quo Option A: no clarification needed for the following reasons:

- Enforcing different size limits on the same vessel is problematic.
- Many vessels operate both as for-hire vessels and private vessels.
- The clarification would not be enforceable at all.

1 AP member supports Option B: add clarification—for-hire measures apply to patrons only noting that while this option is not enforceable, it is a good-will gesture to support mode splits.

Section 3.1.4 Recreational Filleting Requirements Options

9 AP members support the status quo Option A: no filleting requirements for the following reasons:

- It would be very difficult to develop coastwide regulatory language that could be implemented in each state.
- The complexities around fillet requirements (e.g., where to dispose of racks) are state/local issues and should be addressed as such. Not appropriate to include in a coastwide fishery management plan.

Section 3.2.1 Commercial Quota Reduction Options

7 AP members support status quo Option A: status quo commercial quotas for the following reasons:

- This addendum was developed to address the increase in 2022 catch, which was a result of increased recreational harvest. Commercial harvest in 2022 did not increase.
- Commercial industry should not be penalized for the increase in the recreational sector.
- This would be a significant economic loss for commercial fishermen and local markets.
- Commercial industry is highly regulated and managed by hard quota caps.
- Quotas are rarely exceeded, and if they are, there is an immediate quota payback the following year. Quota underages serve as a conservation buffer for the stock.
- The FMP originally intended for a 50-50 split between the commercial and recreational sectors; however, the fishery has become majority recreational (90-10). The commercial sector is a very small percent of the fishery.
- Commercial sector has adjusted gear to avoid large spawning fish.
- Excess mortality is coming from the recreational sector.

4 AP members support Option B: up to 14.5% quota reduction for the following reasons:

- Support a reduction in both the ocean and Bay.
- The environment is not producing enough fish, so the entire fishery (both sectors) need to take a reduction recognizing the declining stock.
- Concern about some state commercial fisheries that allow harvest of large spawners.
- Public commenters were largely in favor of this option.

Section 3.3 Response to Stock Assessment Options

10 AP members support the status quo Option A: Addendum/Amendment process for the following reasons:

- Concern about losing public comment opportunity and losing advance notice of public comment.
- The Commission's existing emergency action provision allows a Management Board to take action in an emergency; that is sufficient to allow the Board quickly in an emergency. The Board should complete the Addendum process during a non-emergency.
- Frustration with the emergency action experience and the lack of AP or public comment before the emergency action was decided.
- Faster is not always better. Addendum II was initiated using a streamlined process alongside the Board's emergency action, but violated the public trust by going beyond the anticipated scope when mode split options were included with very little debate, analysis or data.
- The Commission's Addendum/Amendment process is set up to work through management issues.
- Need to avoid knee-jerk reactions.

2 AP members support Option B: Board action process for the following reasons:

- Public comments have called for the Board to act more quickly, and have criticized the Board for moving too slowly in the past.
- There is a need for quick action to rebuild the stock.

Several AP members would support a hybrid option to speed up the Addendum process in some way, but still include a formal public comment period. AP members noted there needs to be a way to speed up the Addendum process without losing the public comment opportunity.

New Jersey Conservation Equivalency Proposal

ASMFC staff provided an overview of the conservation equivalency (CE) proposal submitted by the State of New Jersey for its Striped Bass Bonus Program (SBBP) under Draft Addendum II. Through CE, New Jersey has reallocated its commercial quota to the recreational fishery (NJ's SBBP) since 1990. The SBBP CE proposal for Draft Addendum II outlines proposed changes to the SBBP size limit, along with corresponding quota changes, depending on what the Board implements through Addendum II.

AP members asked clarifying questions about how the program works, and one AP member noted interest in the history of the SBBP size limits. One AP member commented on the importance of supporting New Jersey's SBBP, noting that New Jersey made a conscious decision on how to best use their commercial quota to support the state's economy. The AP member noted the SBBP has never exceeded its quota and has provided the necessary data and information to support the proposal.