



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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## MEMORANDUM

October 22, 2019

**To: Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**  
**From: Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee**  
**RE: Technical Committee Criteria for Conservation Equivalency with Addendum VI**

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board (Board) approved Draft Addendum VI for public comment in August 2019. The addendum aims to reduce fishing mortality to the target level in 2020 and maintains flexibility for states to pursue alternative regulations through the FMP's conservation equivalency process. In order to streamline implementation of Addendum VI measures, the Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee (TC) met via conference call on October 10, 2019 to establish criteria for the development of conservation equivalency proposals with Draft Addendum VI. The criteria developed are as follows:

### Recreational Fishery

1. If deviating from the Board selected sub-option for recreational fisheries in the ocean region or Chesapeake Bay, states need to submit a state-specific analysis using state-specific data that demonstrates their proposal meets at least the required reduction in total recreational removals, as specified by the Board<sup>1</sup>, relative to 2017 levels.
2. The TC created the following standards for treatment of datasets.
  - a. **Data source:** Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). Alternative data may be used to supplement or replace MRIP data, however, the state must justify its use including a description of source and its applicability to the analysis conducted.
  - b. **Data years:** Pooled 2016-2017 for all size-related analysis to best capture the potential available length frequency in 2020. States submitting seasonal and mode-based analyses should use 2015-2018 data (i.e., the most recent four years). *Note: all conservation equivalency proposals submitted as part of initial implementation for Addendum VI must meet the required reductions relative to 2017 levels and follow the standards established below. All subsequent conservation equivalency proposals need only demonstrate that the proposed measures are equivalent to current state measures in terms of total removals and, therefore, the data years specified above may not be appropriate for future analysis.*

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<sup>1</sup> The recreational sub-options in Draft Addendum VI are projected to achieve at least the required reduction (i.e., 18% or 20%, respectively), but some achieve larger reductions. Accordingly, the Board must specify whether conservation equivalency means equal to 18% or 20% reduction (depending on primary option selected) or the percent reduction estimated under the selected sub-option(s).

- c. **Bag limit and size limit analysis:** Follow the standard procedure used for Draft Addendum VI to explore higher size limits and lower bag limits to achieve the required reductions. The TC does not have a standard methodology for pursuing lower minimum sizes, therefore, alternative methods may be used and will be reviewed on a case by case basis. The TC will consider the use of confidence intervals to achieve the required reductions, although the TC generally requires the point estimate to be at or above the required reduction. If states do use confidence intervals to justify conservation equivalency, it is recommended that the state submit a second proposal based on point estimates in case the first proposal is not endorsed by the TC.
  - d. **Treatment of sublegal harvest or trips that exceed the bag limit:** Assume the same level of non-compliance that occurred in 'data years' will occur in 2020 (this is what the Plan Development Team used in the analysis for Draft Addendum VI).
  - e. **Post release mortality:** Use 9% as the default. States may use alternative estimates with sufficient justification (e.g., supporting literature and data to estimate it).
3. If treating modes separately (e.g., private and for-hire party/charter) states must submit mode-specific data analyses adhering to the standards established in item 2.  
*Note: an individual mode may achieve a lower reduction, but the total, state-wide reduction (weighted by mode-specific removals) must equal at least the total required reduction.*
  4. If using closed seasons to achieve the required reductions, states should consider the dynamics of its fishery and other fisheries that operate in the region during the proposed closed season when making assumptions about the level of removals that will occur (i.e., will there still be release mortality from other trips that could encounter striped bass?). The TC will evaluate proposed season closures on a case by case basis. The TC discussed that season closures less than two weeks duration are unlikely to be effective, but it did not specify a minimum season closure criteria. States must submit season-specific data and analysis adhering to the standards established in item 2 if treating seasons separately (e.g., different regulations between spring and fall).
  5. States may allocate the total required reduction differently between regions (e.g., ocean and inshore waters) and sectors (commercial and recreational) as long as the total, state-wide reduction is at least equal to the total required reduction.

### Commercial Fishery

1. The reduced quotas in Draft Addendum VI account for previously approved conservation equivalency programs, therefore, states do not need to submit for conservation equivalency if they choose to maintain existing size limits in its commercial fisheries. *Note: Connecticut and New Jersey must go through conservation equivalency in order to transfer commercial quota to a recreational striped bass bonus program under Addendum VI.*

2. If a state chooses to modify existing size limits, the state needs to submit a proposal adjusting its quota relative to the new Addendum VI quota baseline (in the case of Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Maryland, the new Addendum VI quota baseline is that established in Addendum IV minus the required percent reduction in quota).

#### Timeline for Submission of Conservation Equivalency Plans

In order to be considered for approval at the February 2020 Board meeting, states must submit conservation equivalency plans by November 29 in order to allow sufficient time for TC review.