



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

October 21, 2019

To: Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board
From: Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel
RE: Advisory Panel Recommendations on Draft Addendum VI

The Advisory Panel (AP) met in person on October 16, 2019 in Linthicum Heights, Maryland to comment on Draft Addendum VI to Amendment 6. Below is a summary of the meeting.

Attendees: Louis Bassano (Chair, NJ – recreational), Dave Pecci (ME – charter/recreational), Kyle Douton (CT – charter/recreational), Arnold Leo (NY – commercial), Al Ristori (NJ – charter), John Pedrick (PA – recreational), Leonard Voss JR. (DE – commercial), David Sikorski (MD – recreational), Bill Hall (VA – recreational), Kelly Place (VA – commercial)

Staff: Max Appelman (FMP Coordinator), Katie Drew (Stock Assessment Team Leader)

3.1 Proposed Management Scenarios

- There was no comment in support of Option 1, status quo.
- The AP did not reach consensus in support of either Option 2 or Option 3.
- Charter and recreational representatives preferred Option 2, equal percent reduction to both sectors. Specific comments included:
 - The stock assessment and FMP does not distinguish commercial versus recreational fishing mortality, so the reductions should be applied proportionally to both sectors
 - An 18% reduction from the recreational sector is a much bigger volume of fish and is a fair and equitable approach based on percentages.
 - Different percent reductions is essentially changing the allocation between sectors
 - Generally, the AP doesn't support one sub-option strongly over the others, because there is little agreement among anglers within states (e.g., private anglers, for-hire, surfcasters, etc., all support different minimum size limit and slot limit options).
 - AP representatives support the use of conservation equivalency as a tool for states to develop and implement measures that work for its fishermen and industries while still achieving the required reductions at the state level.
 - Some representatives support Option 2-A1, 1 fish at 35" minimum for the ocean fishery. Others favored 2-A3, 1 fish at 30"-38" slot limit, and some representatives also support this option as a backup.
 - AP representatives for Chesapeake Bay did not comment on a particular sub-option because the states are exploring conservation equivalency, and they support that direction for the Bay.

- Representatives support regional consistency, especially from a for-hire/multispecies context (e.g., within Long Island Sound, Gulf of Maine, or Chesapeake Bay).
- Commercial representatives preferred Option 3, smaller percent reduction to the commercial quota. Specific comments included:
 - An 18% reduction in commercial quota will cause significant hardship to individual fishermen, and will not help solve the issue because commercial catch is such a small component of overall removals.
 - Overfishing of the stock is due to the recreational sector.
 - The commercial sector has hard quotas, strict monitoring, and enforcement, and there is no accountability for the recreational sector.
 - When the commercial sector takes a cut in quota, harvest comes down to that level and stays there until managers adjust the quota. When the recreational sector takes reductions, harvest still bounces back to prior levels without management action
 - The recreational sector wouldn't be expected to take cuts for overages from the commercial sector.
 - The recreational slot options for Chesapeake Bay will cause discards to go through the roof; the predicted increases in release mortality are grossly underestimated.

3.2 Circle Hook Provision

- In general, the AP recognizes the benefits of circle hooks to reduce hooking mortality and supports Option B, regulation requiring the use of circle hooks. Many anglers already use circle hooks and many more will switch over if it becomes law.
- The AP noted that the effectiveness of circle hooks to reduce hooking mortality varies under different conditions such as whether the tide is running or slack during fishing or whether the point of the hook is dulled or laser-sharpened.
- States should collaborate when developing regulatory language. The AP has strong concerns regarding enforceability and potential for inconsistent regulatory language across the coast, particularly in adjoining waters and jurisdictions.
- Without strong enforcement, anglers will revert back to non-circle-hooks; recommend making it an enforcement priority if it becomes a requirement.
- State efforts should focus on education component.

General Comments

- The Board should focus on the overall goal to reduce F by reducing total removals
- Need to have better accounting for commercial discards.
- Need more discussion on season closures to achieve the reductions; the only way to effectively reduce recreational release mortality is through season closures and other measures that reduce the number of trips encountering striped bass.
- Board should consider other hook types to address discard mortality, not just circle hooks
- Constant reductions (i.e., Addendum IV, this addendum, and the next amendment) are difficult for business planning.
- Support regional consistency, especially in a multispecies, for-hire context.

- Virginia proactively took steps to address overfishing by eliminating the trophy fishery, changing regulations in recreational Fall fishery in Chesapeake Bay, and changing commercial mesh size requirements.