

Statement of the Problem, cont'd

Issue 2: The Striped Bass Technical Committee recommended the Striped Bass Management Board change the way it determines if enough juvenile fish are surviving to sustain the population. When there is not, it is called "recruitment failure." Currently, for the Albemarle Sound/Roanoke River management area, recruitment failure occurs when the average number of juvenile fish (juvenile abundance index) caught in an annual biological sampling program falls below 75 percent of all the previous years' indexes, dating back to 1955. This trigger changes as each new year is added. Under the proposed change, recruitment failure for the Albemarle Sound/Roanoke River management area would occur when the numbers of juvenile fish caught in an annual biological sampling program falls below 75 percent of all other indexes between 1955 and 2009, so that the trigger does not change each year.

Management Options Issue 1

The following options are proposed to consider an increase in the coastal commercial quota of striped bass.

Issue 1:

Option 1: Status Quo

Under this option, the coastal commercial quotas in Amendment 6 would remain unchanged.

The current management regime permits the implementation of management board-approved, alternative regulations that are conservation equivalents to Amendment 6 standards (see Section 4.6 of Amendment 6). The Striped Bass Plan Review Team finds that the plan currently permits a state to propose an increase in its coastal commercial quota through an equivalent reduction in its commercial or recreational fishery (i.e., a revision to its commercial or recreational regulations, such as a minimum size limit increase or closed season/area, to offset the effect on the striped bass population from an increased commercial quota). Any proposals will be reviewed by the Striped Bass Technical Committee, Advisory Panel, and Plan Review Team prior to management board review. The technical committee will consider proposals involving an exchange between the commercial and recreational fleets based on the availability of adequate data and evaluation methods. The management board is interested in public comment on the concept of such alternative management proposals.

Option 2: Increase Coastal Commercial Quotas

Under this option, the management board would select

a specific percent increase to be applied to the coastal commercial quotas established in Amendment 6. Each jurisdiction would be responsible for deciding whether or not to implement the increased quota level. Jurisdictions with coastal commercial quotas that have been modified through conservation equivalency would be required to submit an updated proposal based on the increased quota level as part of their implementation plan.

Management Options Issue 2

Issue 2:

Option 1: Status Quo

Under this option, recruitment failure would be defined as a value that is below 75 percent of all the other values in the juvenile abundance index time series.

Option 2: Redefine Recruitment Failure

Under this option, recruitment failure would be defined as a value that is below 75 percent of all values in a fixed time series appropriate to each juvenile abundance index.

Public Comment

Public comment on the draft addendum will be accepted until 5pm on October 1, 2010. Public hearings are being held in North Carolina at:

6p.m., June 29
One Festival Park, Manteo

6p.m., July 7
Division of Marine Fisheries
Central District Office
5285 Highway 70 West, Morehead City

Comments can be submitted via mail, email, or fax to:

Nichola Meserve, FMP Coordinator
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor
Washington, DC 20005
Fax: 202-289-6051
Phone: 202-289-6400
Email: comments@asmfc.org (subject line:
Atlantic Striped Bass Addendum II)
www.asmfc.org

For additional information on North Carolina's Atlantic Striped Bass fishery, please contact:

Charlton H. Godwin
NC Division of Marine Fisheries
1367 US 17 South
Elizabeth City NC 27909
charlton.godwin@ncdenr.gov
252-264-3911



NC Division of Marine Fisheries Public Information Brochure for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Addendum II to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass



June 2010

Introduction

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) was formed by the fifteen Atlantic Coast states in 1942 to coordinate the conservation and management of the near shore fishery resources shared by the states. The authority to manage Atlantic striped bass lies with the coastal states and is coordinated through the ASMFC under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act.

By federal law North Carolina must enact the requirements of the ASMFC Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) or risk federal sanctions against North Carolina fisheries. The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission chose to adopt all ASMFC FMPs as North Carolina rules through an Interjurisdictional Fishery Management Plan (IJ FMP). Striped bass is one of the species included in the IJ FMP.

Process

The ASMFC has determined that changes to the existing management program for Atlantic striped bass are necessary to meet the goals of the FMP and has developed a draft addendum to address these changes. An addendum is used to adapt components of the management program to changing circumstances within the fishery. It differs from an amendment in two key ways:

- It is a shorter process with one round of public hearings, and
- it generally addresses a few specific management measures being proposed.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to inform the public of issues under consideration by the ASMFC and any potential impacts to North Carolina's fisheries so that the public has opportunity to comment on:

- Changes observed in the fishery;
- Actions that should or should not be taken in terms of management, regulation, enforcement, research, development and enhancement; and
- Other concerns about the resource or the fishery.

Input received at the start of the addendum development process can have a major influence in the outcome of the final addendum.

Current Management

North Carolina has managed the Atlantic striped bass fishery under the ASMFC's Atlantic Striped Bass FMP since 1981. North Carolina also has a separate state FMP for this species in state internal waters. The joint, Marine Fisheries Commission/Wildlife Resources Commission N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass FMP was revised in 2004. Issue 1 of the addendum under consideration only applies to the ocean (coastal migratory) stock that is managed through the ASMFC FMP. Issue 2 applies to the Albemarle/Roanoke stock annual Juvenile Abundance Index.

Amendment 6 established biological reference points (BRPs) to define overfished and overfishing status. Overfished status is defined by a threshold female spawning stock biomass (SSB). Spawning stock biomass refers to the weight of mature female fish in the population. The threshold SSB is the minimum weight of adult females needed to maintain the population. The target female SSB is set above the threshold SSB and is a level that is ideal to maintain the future population while allowing fishing activities to occur. Overfishing is defined as exceeding a threshold fishing mortality rate. The target fishing mortality rate is one that will maintain an age structure for long-term sustainability. The BRPs form the basis for management responses.

Most recreational fisheries are constrained by a two-fish creel limit, 28-inch minimum size limit and year-round fishing season, except in spawning areas. Commercial striped bass fisheries are constrained by minimum size limits and state-by-state quotas.

North Carolina Management

North Carolina manages the commercial Atlantic Ocean striped bass fishery with a minimum size limit of 28 inches and an annual total allowable catch (TAC) of 480,480 pounds. North Carolina commercial landings have averaged 407,726 pounds since a TAC increase of the 2002/2003 season. North Carolina chooses to allocate its quota on a seasonal basis, from December 1-November 30. The fishery is prosecuted with three gears: beach seine, gill net, and trawl. Each sector is allocated one-third of the TAC, while overages in any one sector are deducted from that sector's portion of the TAC the following season.

Status of the Fishery

Currently, the Atlantic striped bass stock is neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing.

In 2008, the recreational fishery harvested an estimated 2.05 million fish coast-wide (25.69 million pounds), com-

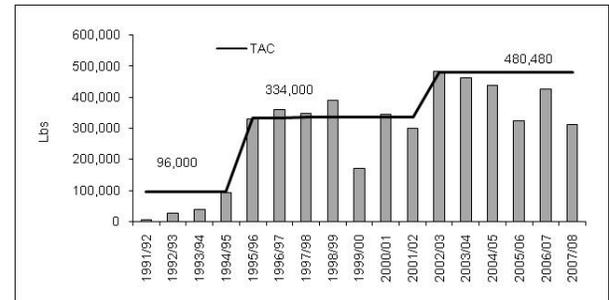
pared to the 2007 harvest of 2.19 million fish (22.58 million pounds). Recreational releases decreased by more than 5 million fish to 11.85 million fish, for an estimated 1.07 million dead discarded fish (9 percent of releases).

The commercial fishery landed an estimated 1.01 million fish coastwide (7.19 million pounds) in 2008, compared to the 2007 harvest of 1.02 million fish (7.05 million pounds).

North Carolina Fishery

Atlantic striped bass are usually found in the near-shore waters of North Carolina from December through February and early March, at which time they begin their spring migration to spawning sites in the Chesapeake Bay, Hudson Bay, and Delaware Bay. North Carolina has not met its full TAC since the 2003/2004 season. Milder winters and warmer ocean water temperatures have kept Atlantic striped bass farther north, with fewer fish in North Carolina coastal waters, where they are available for harvest. Since the 2004/2005 season North Carolina has averaged landings 105,205 pounds below the TAC.

Figure 1. North Carolina commercial harvest and total allowable catch (TAC) of striped bass in the



Statement of the Problem

Issue 1: Although Amendment 6 established management programs for both the commercial and recreational fisheries based on the same target fishing mortality rate, the implementation of state-specific quotas for coastal commercial harvest (and not for recreational harvest) has prevented the commercial and recreational fisheries from responding equally to changes in striped bass population size. Options are presented to allocate additional striped bass to the commercial fleet through an increase in the coastal commercial harvest quota in order to increase equality between the two fleets.