



Statement of Position on Striped Bass Amendment 7

The TRCP strongly encourages recreational anglers to provide input on Striped Bass management either by attending virtual [state public hearings](#) or providing written comment. Use this position guide in combination with [ASMFC PID](#).

1) Fisheries Goals and Objectives

The existing goal and objectives of Amendment 6 remain in line with current fishery needs and priorities and no changes are needed.

The number one priority of Amendment 7 should be to restore and maintain an age structure that provides adequate spawning potential to sustain long-term abundance of striped bass populations.

2) Biological Reference Points

There is no reason to change the reference points at this time.

The 1995 spawning stock biomass (SSB) was selected because that was the year the ASMFC declared the stock recovered from its depleted status in the 1980s, and many desirable stock characteristics were achieved, including expanded age structure. The additional 25% buffer for the target was to account for uncertainty in the SSB estimates, and also produced a target value comparable to those observed prior to the stock's collapse in the 1970's.

The current biomass reference points are based on verifiable observation and represent the best science currently available. There are no viable model-based alternatives available to managers at this time, and potential replacements to the current reference points are restricted by data and modeling limitations. Modifying the reference points has no scientific basis and it is inappropriate to weaken the standards without any new science to support the change.

The focus of Amendment 7 should be to reduce fishing mortality (F), not lowering the standards managers use to determine the health of the fishery.

3) Management Triggers and 4) Stock Rebuilding Target and Timeline

The management triggers and rebuilding timelines are consistent with the biological understanding of the species and should be maintained.

While the management triggers could be improved by lowering the juvenile abundance index trigger for action from three years consecutive years to two, overall the management triggers and rebuilding timelines are consistent with the biological understanding of the species and should be maintained.

5) Regional Management

Regional Management should be removed from the Amendment.

Until scientific models have been developed that account for regional differences in the fishery and the fish stocks, the Board should take no action on this matter.

6) Conservation Equivalency

Conservation Equivalency (CE) should not be part of striped bass management.

The ASMFC should be striving for simpler and consistent management, not individual plans. With each state introducing their own versions, the risk of exceeding the coastwide fishing mortality target is too high. As stated in the PID, "It is challenging to evaluate the effectiveness or success of CE programs once implemented because of the difficulty in separating the effects of the CE program from other factors like angler behavior and availability of fish that determine the amount of catch and release that occurs." Allowing deviation from the coastwide standard creates regulatory inconsistency among states and within shared waterbodies.

7) Recreational Release Mortality

The Striped Bass Management Board should continue to try and reduce post release mortality.

Post-release mortality could be reduced through state/federal funded angler education on safe release, as well as continued study of gear type, e.g. mandatory circle hooks and elimination of treble hooks. Seasonal closures due to unfavorable environmental conditions should be used too. The State of Massachusetts is working on a comprehensive post release mortality study. Waiting for this information before proceeding would be prudent.

8) Recreational Accountability

Current limitations of recreational catch data make it difficult to measure accountability

The uncertainty of recreational catch data creates significant challenges to fisheries science and management. However, recreational anglers and individual states must also be held to account for their catch and the Board should explore various options for increasing accountability, especially when the stock is in an overfished state.

9) Coastal Commercial Quota Allocation

TRCP has no position on Coastal Commercial Quota Allocation

10) Other Issues

All commercial catch should be done by hook and line only, if at all.

Gill netting for striped bass should be banned in the Atlantic and Chesapeake. The gear is non-selective and results in large quantities of by-catch which is discarded and then washes up on the beach dead. Gill nets also present a direct hazard to marine mammals. Gill-netting is done close to the beach which causes user conflict between surf casters and commercial crews. New York is the only state in the Northeast where Striped Bass can be taken by gill nets. The ASMFC should mandate that only rod and reel be used for commercial striped bass fishing.