



The Watch

Doug MacPherson, Chairman



The RISAA Legislative Committee’s mission is to provide, in partnership with the Affiliated Clubs, a forum for improving the knowledge and understanding of fishery-related and government issues that affect recreational anglers. An informed membership encourages involvement and advocacy. The Legislative Committee will strive to advocate responsible fishery decision.

The Committee is comprised of RISAA Members and delegates from the Affiliated Clubs. The Committee meets two or three times a year, depending on the number of fishery and/or legislative issues that develop.

2019 Committee and Upcoming Issues

THE COMMITTEE

A new year, a new committee chairperson. I would like to thank **Dave Monti** for an excellent job as chairperson of the Legislative Committee for the past five years, and for keeping us all informed and engaged on many important issues facing recreational fisherman. Dave has promised to continue writing reports, especially on national issues.



Capt. Dave Monti

As the new chairperson, it is my intent to continue bringing up issues of importance to the recreational fisherman, asking for your support in adding your voice in the sometimes short-notice windows, to impact future regulations and the direction of our fisheries and the protection of the environment to ensure healthy and abundant fisheries for all.

For me, this has always been the critical job for this committee, but it does not work if we don’t get you, our members’ support at public hearings and adding your own voice to public comments when needed.

I know, after attending many Marine Fisheries Council meetings in Narragansett, that yes, it is sometimes boring while waiting in the audience for recreational issues to be brought up, but hey, you get to talk about fish and fishing in February and March and enjoy a beautiful view of the bay as you walk back to your car.

I would also like to thank the representatives/delegates of our affiliate clubs, some who drove a long way to get to this meeting, for their participation and contributions. I want to let all of our affiliated organizations know that we always appreciate hearing your views and suggestions. We are all in this together. So, let’s go with some to the issues before us.

STRIPED BASS

A public hearing is scheduled in Rhode Island on February 11, 2019 for the determination of regulations for the upcoming season. As I write this, we are just getting early news of the new stock assessment from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) which is due out in February 2019.



Preliminary reports have NOT been good. The assessment summary has concluded that the female striped bass population has fallen below the spawning stock biomass (SSB).

The conclusion under current guidelines is that the striped bass population is overfished and overfishing is occurring.

I strongly urge any fisherman out there who is concerned about these findings to mark this public hearing date on your calendar and plan to attend, listen and voice your thoughts.

SUMMER FLOUNDER, BLACK SEA BASS, AND SCUP

The ASMFC will be meeting in Arlington, VA on Feb. 5-7 to finalize specifications for the 2019 season.

The meeting notice and agenda of this meeting can be found at <http://www.asmfc.org/home/2019-winter-meeting>.

During the December 5 meeting of this RISAA Legislative Committee several options were brought forward by committee members regarding the general difficulty of catching black sea bass or summer flounder from shore locations at their current and likely future size limits.

RIDEM has already established a number of special public access areas where scup can be taken at an 8 inch limit and a bag of 30 fish. We agreed to ask DEM to consider whether it would be possible to have a lower size limit for both summer flounder and black sea bass from these same locations as well, to give the shore fisherman a better chance to land and keep some fish they currently they would otherwise have to return to the water.



The committee also made it clear that the RI late spring opening of the black sea bass last year of June 24 severely impacted the small boat and shore anglers as well as local tackle shops. The committee voted to request that DEM set the opening of the black bass season as early as possible in 2019.

Based upon my own experience, I have reliably found legal size black sea bass in Narragansett Bay as early as the first week of June with their numbers in the bay quickly diminishing as we get to July.

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