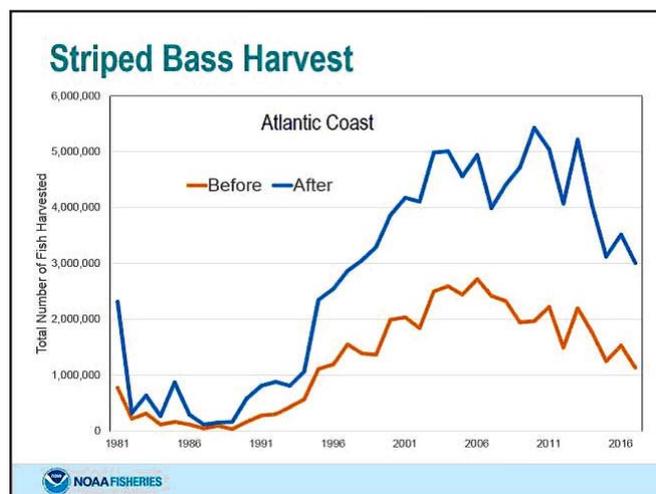


STRIPED BASS IN TROUBLE: (from page 6)

There will be a great effort to shift the female spawning stock biomass threshold to a lower level, and increase the threshold for fishing mortality.

We should all be familiar with the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). It is the recreational data collection system that managers use to estimate our catch. MRIP is a relatively new system. It was reviewed by the National Academy of Sciences earlier in the year and found to be acceptable. There were several suggestions to improve the data. One of these suggestions was using cell phones rather than house phones for surveys. While that has not yet been done, MRIP has replaced the household telephone survey with a survey sent out in the mail. This simple change resulted in more robust data as well as the reality that stripers are being harvested at a greater rate than previously thought.



The amber line (on chart above) is the previous accepted harvest rate. The blue line is the new harvest rate based on the MRIP re-calibration.

Please understand the MRIP is a data collection system for anglers, not commercial fishermen. Because the harvest is greater, that means that there must have been more fish in the system that previously assumed. It isn't a one for one transaction. Statistics and models never are. But, let's just say we weren't just harvesting more, there were more fish out there than previously assumed. This data adjusted the BRP's by proxy.

That's about all the background information you need to understand what I'm about to show you. Below is a screen shot of the conclusion from the SARC/SAW webinar.

SAW-66 ASSESSMENT SUMMARY REPORT

B. ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY FOR 2018

State of Stock

The current SSB threshold for Atlantic striped bass is the 1995 estimate of female SSB. The F threshold is the F value that allows the stock to achieve the SSB threshold under long-term equilibrium conditions.

Female SSB for Atlantic striped bass in 2017 was 68,476 mt, less than the SSB_{threshold} of 91,436 mt, indicating the stock is overfished (Figure B1). The associated F_{threshold} was 0.240 f; F₂₀₁₇ was 0.307, indicating the stock is experiencing overfishing (Figure B1).

Projections

Striped bass are **overfished** and **overfishing is occurring** according to these numbers. The re-calibrated threshold is 91,436 mt. The SSB population is at 68,476 mt. That's less than 75% of the threshold number. The last time we have been this low was in 1993, two years before the moratorium was lifted. The (f) number is the variable used to represent fishing mortality. The max allowed is .240. We are killing them at a rate of .307.

Striped bass aren't out in the ocean. We aren't using the wrong bait. It isn't the commercial sector's fault. **WE KILLED THEM.** Let that sink in.

There is no 2011-year class waiting to replenish the stocks. They died at the hands of Maryland anglers. We now sit on the precipice of a managerial struggle.

There are many that will try to shift the baseline by using lowering the BRP's. They will say that the holding capacity of the Chesapeake Bay isn't the same as 2006 when the stock peaked. They will say that the current levels are unattainable. How can we attain the proper population level, while killing them at this rate? They will try every trick in the book.

It rests on our shoulders and ours alone to make sure the striped bass population recovers. It will take a herculean effort to turn the tide. But we can do it. Do we have any other choice?

Striped bass have given us all countless good memories. They have taught our children countless lessons about the ocean and how to care for it. They have helped forge friendships. They have created a mutual bond across the coast.

Don't they deserve our time and effort when it is most needed? Haven't stripers given enough? At what juncture do we decide to give back? The time is now.

Saddle up everyone, we have until February 2019 to create an uproar.

Be certain that the harvest more side will be working tirelessly to exploit the system. We have to work just as hard and hope that it is enough to ensure that those bonds, friendships, and lessons can continue with the next generation.



About Tony Friedrich

Tony has worked in the field of conservation for over a decade. He was the founder of Lefty Kreh's TieFest, the largest independent fly fishing show in the Mid-Atlantic, and the Executive Director for CCA Maryland for almost 8 years. He lives on the Maryland's Eastern Shore.

