



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.

Tis the Season for Meeting When It Comes to Fisheries Management

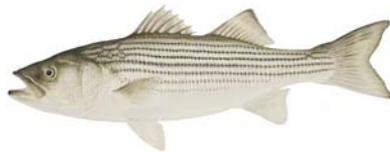
ASMFC Winter Meeting

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Winter Meeting took place February 5-7. What is apparent in reading the 2019 Winter Meeting Summary report is that many species management plans were simply left as status quo due to data and assessments not updated or completed as a result of the government shutdown and its impact on NOAA.



Striped Bass

The Management Board only had preliminary findings from the 2018 Benchmark Assessment, however based upon that data, it was concluded that that striped bass in 2017 was *overfished and experiencing overfishing*. The board “discussed the need for adaptive management to end overfishing and increase female spawning stock biomass”.



The Board also instructed the Technical Committee, “Specifically, the TC was tasked with estimating levels of removals needed to reduce fishing mortality (F) to the F threshold and the F target, and to also provide an example recreational bag and size limit combination that would achieve those conditions on the coast and in the Chesapeake Bay. The TC will report back to the Board in May.”

In plain English that translates to probable future reductions in commercial and recreation catch and possible enactment of fishing methods to reduce catch and release mortality.

The board also approved drafting a letter to NOAA **opposing** the opening of the transit zones to striped bass fishing, (including Block Island) based upon the preliminary assessment reports. This has been referred to as the Block Island Transit Zone. Final approval of the draft letter will be made at the May meeting.

Current limits for the recreational catch will remain status quo for 2019.

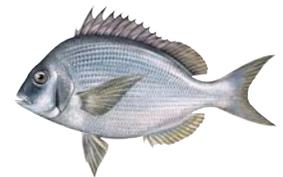
Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass

Black sea bass. With regards to black sea bass, the committee approved the recommendations for status quo for

recreational fishing.

Scup. At its previous meeting in December, the Board approved continuation of the current management of the recreational scup fishery for 2019.

Recreational landings for scup in 2018 were 1.76 M lbs. below recreational harvest limit at the end of October 2018. There were six proposals from the Northern Region states (MA thru NY) for 2019. The Technical Committee reviewed the proposals and recommended the Board only consider approving options that adjust the for-hire possession limit and bonus season due to uncertainty in how coastwide harvest could increase as a result of changes to the possession limit for other fishing modes



We will not see any reduction for 2019 and there may be some small increases in general recreational catch limits. The Special Recreational Shore catch will not be affected, and increased catch levels were approved for Party and Charter participants including the additional higher catch limits during the Bonus Season.

There was no action on **Summer Flounder** status at this meeting.

Menhaden

“The Commission’s Atlantic Menhaden Management Board postponed indefinitely action to find the Commonwealth of Virginia out of compliance with the provisions of Amendment 3 to the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden, specifically the Commonwealth’s failure to implement the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery cap of 51,000 mt. This action is contingent upon the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery not exceeding the cap. If the cap is exceeded, the Board can reconsider the issue of compliance.”



There was a lot of discussion about current data, etc., but the bottom line is that this does not bode well for the future.

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