



The Watch

Capt. Dave Monti, 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.

Some say “Let’s take striped bass in the EEZ.” ...others say NO!

Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-NY-1) sponsored an amendment on an approved U.S. House appropriations bill that prohibits the Coast Guard and NOAA Fisheries from enforcing a moratorium on striped bass in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surrounding Block Island, Rhode Island.

Under this House approved amendment additional large premium fish capable of bearing a lot of eggs will be killed. At press time the approved House appropriations bill (which has nothing to do with fishing) including Rep. Zeldin’s amendment tacked on to it is now in the U.S. Senate under consideration.

The EEZ extends from the shoreline out to 200 nautical miles and includes state waters which generally extend three miles from shore. The EEZ was established to give sovereign states control of waters in the area for such activities as fishing, oil and gas exploration, (and now windfarms).

Conflicting points of view on the issue

There are mixed feelings about allowing fishing for striped bass in the EEZ. Some charter captains, private anglers and commercial fishermen want to open the EEZ. They say many boats often break the law now so why give law breakers the advantage and not allow everyone to take these fish?

Greg Vespe, president of the Aquidneck Island Striper Team, mate on *Flippin Out Charters* and RISAA board member said, “For some who followed the rules this will probably be welcomed, since the other option of enforcing it has largely been a total failure. Now it’s an even playing field. As a tournament fisherman I can certainly say I am tired of competing against guys going over the line. Watching it night after night gets old. I didn’t like it when it was enacted and I haven’t liked it since, but at least I wanted it enforced if it existed.”

Doug MacPherson, recreational fishermen, RISAA board member and legislative watch committee chair said, “This was a

nasty rider on the appropriations bill. NOAA’s budgets overall are being slashed to an extent that will probably cripple their ability to continue their current mission. We should write our congressional delegations on the issue.”

George Allen, past vice president and legislation committee chair of the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association said, “Allowing these fish to be killed in the EEZ is a travesty. Select boats have been illegally fishing in the EEZ with poor enforcement already. Now with NOAA and the Coast Guard not enforcing law, the flood gates will be open to New York, Connecticut, New Jersey and Rhode Island boats that will hammer these fish.”

Capt. Rick Bellavance of the Rhode Island Party & Charter Boat Association said, “We are taking no official stand on the issue as some members believe we should be allowed to fish in the EEZ. Yet others are concerned about party boats sitting on these fish and really doing them damage.”

Many of the fish caught in this area have historically been some of the largest northeast striped bass consistently in the 30, 40 and 50 pound range. These larger fish become egg bearing females.

My perspective...

Why EEZ striped bass fishing is a bad idea

First, the proposed action is not based on science, but rather politics with Rep. Zeldin doing the bidding of primarily New York charter & party boats, which simply want to take more fish by being allowed to fish in the EEZ.

What impact this will have on striped bass stocks is unknown, but if you believe the EEZ is our striped bass savings bank, the impact will surely be negative.

Second, this amendment will lead to the killing of many additional large premium breeders as these are the fish that are targeted in this area.

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Steve Brustein of Portland, Maine with a 30-pound striped bass caught at the at the Southwest Ledge, Block Island.