

WITEK: Management (from page 6)

They are an important commercial species, and most of the harvest is allocated to the commercial sector.

However, scup are also a very popular recreational target, particularly among party boat patrons—so popular that, last year here in New York, scup comprised more than 70% of all fish landed on such for-hire vessels.

The recreational fishermen who catch scup often keep them; nearly half of those landed were harvested. Thus, it is clear that scup should be managed as “food fish,” and that managers should place their greatest emphasis on maintaining yield.

“Sport fish,” such as striped bass and bluefish, anchor the other extreme of the mixed-use spectrum. Both support small commercial fisheries, and both are eaten by some of the anglers who catch them. However, the data amply demonstrates that neither support fisheries dominated by “meat” fishermen; instead, most anglers who seek striped bass and/or bluefish—which frequently share the same waters and are caught by the same recreational fishermen—release much of their catch.

That is particularly true in the case of striped bass. During the years 2014 through 2108, anglers caught a total of about 167 million striped bass. Of those fish, approximately 155 million, or about 92%, were released.

Release rates varied by “mode” of catch. Surfcasters and other shore-based fishermen had the highest release rate, 96%, while party boat fishermen released only 65% of their striped bass, the lowest figure reported. Charter boat and private boat fishermen fell in between those extremes, respectively releasing 77% and 91% of all striped bass caught.

Because private boat anglers dominate the fishery, and accounted for about 69% of all recreational striped bass caught during the period in question (shore based anglers came in a distant second, catching a little more than 28%), they skewed the overall release percentage to a very respectable 92%.

Thus, as fishery managers begin to look at the overfished striped bass population, and start to craft measures intended to end overfishing and rebuild the overfished stock, they must always keep in mind that the majority of striped bass fishermen are not primarily fishing for food, but rather for sport, and that a great majority of the striped bass caught are released.

That means that managers’ primary goal should be increasing striped bass abundance, not maintaining current yield. For in the recreational striped bass fishery (and in similar fisheries for bluefish, king mackerel and other species), **it’s the fish in the ocean, and not the fish in the cooler, that matter most.**

Captain’s License

pass our test - no test with USCG



**6-Pack
Master 100GT
Master Upgrade
Launch**

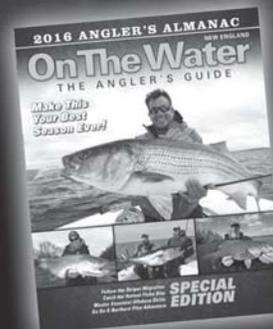
RI & CT approved: 1 DAY SAFE BOATING

www.boatwise.com

800-698-7373

On The Water THE ANGLER'S GUIDE

Your fishing. Your magazine.



Subscribe today and get the most informative local fishing magazine out there.

ONLY \$25
1 Year/11 issues

Visit OnTheWater.com or call 508-548-4705 to subscribe today!

Fly Fishing • Light Tackle

On The Rocks Charters

Capt. Rene Letourneau

401-359-3625

www.ontherockscharters.com

10% off to
RISAA members



Block Island Fishworks

Est. 2000

401-742-3992 & 401-466-5392

Fishing Guides & Charters

Bait & Tackle Shop

Fly Fishing Outfitter

Surf Casting Tackle

Rentals and Fishing Info

Weigh Station

www.bifishworks.com bifishworks@gmail.com

Located at:
40 Ocean Ave,
New Harbor