



# 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.

## ASMFC Annual Meeting Report

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) held its 79th Annual Meeting via webinar on October 19-22. Here is a synopsis of what went on.

### ATLANTIC HERRING BOARD

The Board didn’t take any action. They reviewed the 2021-2023 fishery specs package which was approved by the New England Fisheries Council.

### WINTER FLOUNDER MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Board reviewed the 2020 assessment updates for the Gulf of Maine (GOM) and the Southern New England/ England Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) winter flounder stock. The assessment indicates overfishing was not occurring in 2019.

The GOM survey indices of abundance are relatively flat over time with little change in structure.

The SNE/MA assessment indicates the stock is overfished but overfishing did not occur in 2019. The spawning stock biomass estimate reached a time series low in 2019 of 64% of the threshold despite low levels of fishing mortality.

The board expressed concern over the SNE/MA depleted stock status and low probability of rebuilding to the biomass target by 2023.

### AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD

This was a long meeting with many motions. The 2020 stock assessment presented contrasting results for the two lobster stock units with record high abundance in the Gulf of Maine and George’s Bank (GOM/GBK) and record low abundance and recruitment in the Southern New England (SNE) stock in recent years.

The SNE stock is “significantly depleted with poor prospects of recovery.”

### ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD

The results of this meeting did not go as hoped by most recreational fishing and environmental groups.

They approved a Total Allowable Catch of 194,400 metric tons for 2021 and 2022 which is a 10% reduction.

But this isn’t low enough since it only has a 41% probability of keeping landings below the target. The ASMFC had set the target, but politics and \$\$\$ keeps them from enforcing their own science.



### ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Board met to consider approving state implementation plans for circle hook measures, which are required by Addendum VI, the intent of which was to reduce mortality when fishing with bait in recreational striped bass fisheries. All states had to submit their hook regulations.

The Plan Review Team (PRT) noted a lot of variation in regulatory language among states, although they all essentially said the same thing. Noted was concerns raised by the Law Enforcement Committee stressing the importance of all jurisdictions agreeing on standardized language to improve compliance and enforcement, especially with states that share common borders.

Two states **Maine and Massachusetts proposed exemptions**, but the PRT was unable to make definitive recommendations regarding these requests due to limited guidance on what constitutes an acceptable level of flexibility.

The Board discussed whether proposed exemptions would lead to other “niche” exemptions across state fisheries, further weakening enforceability and undermining the intent of the circle hook provision. The Board decided that no exemptions would be allowed. Maine and Massachusetts will have to remove their exemptions to circle hooks in state regulations.

And then the Board reviewed the first draft of the **Public Information Document (PID) for Amendment 7**, the first step in the process for future regulations.

The PID highlights nine issues:

- fisheries goals/objectives
- biological reference points
- management triggers
- stock rebuilding
- regional management
- conservation equivalency•
- recreational release mortality
- recreational accountability
- costal commercial quota allocation.

### JOIN RISAA LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

All RISA members are welcome to join the RISAA Legislative Committee. If you are interested or if you have any questions, you can contact me by email at [macpherson@risaa.org](mailto:macpherson@risaa.org)