



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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ASMFC REJECTS COMMERCIAL STRIPER QUOTA INCREASE

November 9, 2010 - The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) today rejected a proposed increase in commercial striped bass quota. The final vote of 10-4-1 in favor of status quo was supported by Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

States which supported measures to increase the commercial harvest of striped bass including North Carolina, Delaware, Rhode Island and New York. The ASMFC representative from the District of Columbia was absent for the vote and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission voted to abstain.

“We’re pleased that there’s no commercial increase, but as we’ve said all along there was no need for any increase in either the commercial or recreational sector, not when there are so many questions with regard to the illegal and unreported harvest we know to be taking place in federal waters,” said Jim Donofrio Executive Director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA). Donofrio cited evidence from federal enforcement authorities over the past two seasons of a number of striped bass harvest violations in federal waters off North Carolina in January and February when big breeding size fish are staging several miles off Carolina’s Outer Banks. Donofrio notes that it’s illegal for any striped bass to be harvested outside of 3 miles from shore, whether commercial or recreational.

“Now that we’re done with this debate over increasing commercial harvest of striped bass, it’s time for the ASMFC and the federal government to figure out what’s going on with the illegal fishery as documented by the U.S. Coast Guard,” Donofrio added.

Last month, Donofrio submitted official comments to the ASMFC on behalf of RFA and the New York Sportfishing Federation, opposing efforts to increase the commercial striped bass harvest based on several issues including the illegal harvest in federal waters while also citing recent stock assessments showing that the 2007 and 2008 striped bass population abundance estimates (in numbers of fish) are the lowest in the past 15 years. The RFA noted that at a time when recreational anglers are asking ASMFC to look at efforts to reduce the number of bigger breeding striped bass harvest, the proposal to kill more fish in the commercial sector was ill-timed.

“There is growing consensus within the recreational sector that our coastal regulations should be modified to minimize harvest on bigger, older fish in the population,” said RFA Managing Director and New York Sportfishing Federation president, Jim Hutchinson, Jr. “I’m once again disappointed to learn that our New York delegates failed to listen to the overwhelming opposition to increased striper harvest within our recreational fishing community, but thankfully there’s proper reasoning coming from other ASMFC states.” Hutchinson noted that a series of hearings were held to gauge public comment on the proposal, which he said was overwhelming in New York as being opposed to the increase.

“The anglers made it clear that it’s time to talk about renewed conservation efforts to protect breeding stock fish, and I don’t know if there’s anyone I’ve spoken to in the recreational sector who believed that a quota increase was appropriate at this time, certainly not in New York or New Jersey,” Hutchinson said.

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The Recreational Fishing Alliance is a national, grassroots political action organization representing recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on marine fisheries issues. RFA’s Mission is to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers, protect marine, boat and tackle industry jobs, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our Nation’s saltwater fisheries. For more information, call 888-JOIN-RFA or visit www.joinrfa.org.