



Paul J. Diodati
Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

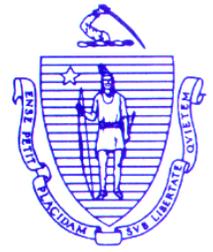
Division of Marine Fisheries

251 Causeway Street, Suite 400

Boston, Massachusetts 02114

(617)626-1520

fax (617)626-1509



Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn E. Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Matthew A. Beaton
Secretary

George N. Peterson, Jr.
Commissioner

Mary-Lee King
Deputy Commissioner

April 10, 2015

Marine Fisheries Advisory

New Recreational Regulations for Striped Bass: 1 fish at 28"

The Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) has adopted a 1-fish recreational bag limit for Atlantic striped bass in 2015; the recreational minimum size limit remains the same at 28". This bag limit reduction (from 2 fish) was undertaken to reduce recreational harvest in Massachusetts by at least 25%, as required by the interstate management plan. Massachusetts' commercial quota has also been reduced by 25%. Read on for further details.

This past October, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Addendum IV to Amendment 6 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass. The Addendum responds to results of the 2013 benchmark stock assessment, which found that fishing mortality in 2012 was above target, and female spawning stock biomass has been steadily declining below the target level since 2006.

Addendum IV adopts a 25% harvest reduction from 2013 levels for coastal fisheries, and 20.5% harvest reduction from 2012 levels for the Chesapeake Bay fisheries (this lower reduction is due to the Bay jurisdictions taking a 14% cut in 2013 based on their management program). For the coastal fisheries, the Addendum reduces the commercial quotas by 25% and decreases the recreational bag limit to 1 fish. Under Amendment 6, states may implement alternative state-specific recreational measures if they can demonstrate that the measures will have the same conservation value.

Marine Fisheries collected public comment on several options to comply with Addendum IV this past winter. At the request of some representatives and participants in the for-hire fishery, we entertained two alternatives to the 1 fish at 28" FMP standard that included 2 fish at more conservative size limits; these alternatives would have applied only to the for-hire fishing mode.

After careful consideration, *Marine Fisheries* and the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission selected the FMP standard of 1 fish at 28" minimum for all modes (private and for-hire). This change has the best chance of achieving a 25% harvest reduction, is easiest to understand, encourages compliance, and simplifies enforcement. In addition, public support for the 2-fish alternatives was limited.

Harvest projections for mode-specific regulations are less certain than for fishery-wide regulations. Confidence in the effectiveness of mode-specific regulations is further reduced if compliance erodes. Introducing a separate striped bass measure to regulate the for-hire mode from all other recreational fishermen (and commercial fishermen) would reduce compliance and complicate enforcement. Enforcement of alternative rules across the entire population of our for-hire permit holders (numbering 900), particularly when for-hire permit holders are fishing without patrons aboard, would have proven troublesome. A universal rule also removes any negative perceptions about benefits from a "dual-standard" allowed to for-hire patrons. Anglers in Massachusetts will operate under the same rules as those in our neighboring states in 2015, as New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut have also adopted 1 fish at 28" minimum rules. For more information, refer to www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.