



October 22, 2019

Dr. Michael Armstrong
Chairman
Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chairman Armstrong and Members of the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board,

On behalf of America's 7.5 million striped bass anglers and the recreational fishing and boating industries, we support ending overfishing to begin rebuilding striped bass by taking an 18% reduction from the recreational and commercial fisheries. The sportfishing community stands by the cooperative process of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and understands that tough management decisions must be made for the benefit of our shared resources and associated fisheries. We see the upcoming striped bass management decision as an opportunity for ASMFC to continue leading in fisheries management with the states and its stakeholders making up the core of its cooperative process.

As you know, the foundation of ASMFC was fortified by the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act. The Act harmonized a process of interjurisdictional fisheries management that is ultimately responsible for the successful recovery of striped bass. That recovery was shouldered by the states and their fishing communities because everyone understood the value of a healthy public resource and shared in the goal to rebuild. Several events have led to striped bass currently being overfished and experiencing overfishing, but we believe we can return striped bass to a healthy condition again by working together through the ASMFC process.

During the comment period on Addendum VI, you heard from thousands of striped bass anglers and recreational fishing-dependent businesses passionately speaking about their willingness to play a role in ending overfishing and rebuilding striped bass. Striped bass is one of the most sought-after sportfish in the nation and the reason many anglers are hooked on fishing. The future of our sportfishing heritage depends on the conservation and management decisions before the ASMFC today.

America's anglers and boaters play an integral role in the stewardship of our fisheries by directly funding conservation and habitat restoration efforts through licensing fees and excise taxes set up through the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund on fishing equipment and boat fuel. In 2019 alone, \$365.4 million was apportioned to the states to fund fishery conservation programs. Funds from this program helped rebuild and restore striped bass from the challenges faced in the 1980s, and our community proudly will fund conservation of America's public marine resources into the future.

While we support equal burden sharing for both user groups in the 18% reduction in mortality deemed necessary by the ASMFC Striped Bass Technical Committee, we also support the mandatory use of circle hooks when fishing with bait across all states and jurisdictions to reduce discard mortality. The effectiveness of non-offset circle hooks has been proven through more than a decade of mandatory use in the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fisheries.

We believe that by uniting and working together, striped bass can continue to be a management success story for ASMFC and our community. We thank you for carefully considering the importance of the striped bass recreational fishery to conservation and the Atlantic states' economies. We encourage the states to work cooperatively within the management process to bring real management reform that will ensure a healthy future for all who participate in the striped bass fishery.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any further questions, please contact American Sportfishing Association's Atlantic Fisheries Policy Director Mike Waine at mwaine@asafishing.org or 508.221.5508.

Sincerely,

Glenn Hughes, President
American Sportfishing Association

Jeff Crane, President
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Chris Edmonston, VP Government Affairs
BoatU.S.

Matt Gruhn, President
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas

Jeff Angers, President
Center for Sportfishing Policy

Frank Hugelmeyer, President
National Marine Manufacturers Association

Patrick Murray, President
Coastal Conservation Association

Jim Donofrio, President
Recreational Fishing Alliance

CC: Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Members
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Executive Director Robert Beal