

## Statement of the Problem, cont'd

While avoiding a quota overage signifies managerial success, a quota underage represents lost opportunity to commercial harvesters. North Carolina has not harvested its full 480,480-pound commercial ocean quota since the 2003-2004 season. The ASMFC Striped Bass Technical Committee determined that implementation of a quota rollover provision would not produce a statistically significant increase in the fishing mortality rate.

## Management Options

The following options are proposed for considering roll over of unused coastal commercial quota. Adopted options (other than status quo) would modify Amendment 6, Section 4.3.2.

### Issue 1: Treatment of Unused Commercial Quota

Option 1: Status Quo. Under this option no unused coastal commercial quota would be rolled over to the subsequent year(s).

Option 2: Allow Roll Over. Under this option, rolling over unused coastal commercial quota to the subsequent year(s) would be allowed. Restrictions regarding roll over will be specified in Issues 2-4.

### Issue 2: State Eligibility

Option 1: No restrictions to eligibility. Under this option, all states with coastal commercial quota allocations in Amendment 6 would be eligible to roll over unused coastal commercial quota.

Option 2: Eligibility restricted to states that allocate their striped bass coastal quotas, whether commercially or recreationally. Under this option, states currently eligible to roll over unused coastal commercial quota would be Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Major regulatory changes could change a state's eligibility for roll over.

### Issue 3: Amount of Roll Over

Option 1: No Restrictions to roll over amount. Under this option, any amount of harvest below a state's quota in one year could be added to the state's quota for the subsequent year.

Option 2: Roll over amount based on state striped bass quota (pounds). Under this option, the amount of unused commercial quota that could be rolled-over in any year would be a percentage of the state's quota.

The maximum percentage that will be considered is 50 percent.

Option 3: Roll over amount based on striped bass quota underage amount (pounds). Under this option, the maximum amount of unused commercial quota that could be rolled-over in any year would be a percentage of the underage amount. The maximum percentage that will be considered is 50 percent.

### Issue 4: Roll Over Term

Options are not being considered for the number of years unused quota could be rolled forward. With anything more than a one year roll over term, unused quota could accumulate across years and eventually result in a very large harvest in one year, which could have a more severe effect on the stock. Therefore, if options to allow roll over are approved, there would be a one year term on roll over. Unused quota would only be added to the subsequent year's quota, and if it is not harvested that year, the underage is not available for roll over into any other years.

## Public Comment

Public comment on the draft addendum will be accepted until 5pm on October 16, 2009. A public hearing is being held in North Carolina at 6p.m. on October 14 at Roanoke Island Festival Park, 1 Festival Park, Manteo, NC 27954. Comments can be submitted via regular mail, email, or fax to:

**Nichola Meserve, FMP Coordinator**  
**ASMFC**  
**1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor**  
**Washington, DC 20005**  
**Fax: 202-289-6051**  
**Phone: 202-289-6400**  
**Email: [comments@asmfc.org](mailto:comments@asmfc.org) (subject line: Atlantic Striped Bass Addendum II)**  
**[www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org)**

For additional information on North Carolina's Atlantic Striped Bass fishery, please contact:

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# NC Division of Marine Fisheries Public Information Brochure for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Addendum II to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass



September 2009

## Introduction

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) was formed by the fifteen Atlantic Coast states in 1942 to coordinate the conservation and management of the near shore fishery resources shared by the states. The authority to manage Atlantic striped bass lies with the coastal states and is coordinated through the ASMFC under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act.

By federal law North Carolina must enact the requirements of the ASMFC Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) or risk federal sanctions against North Carolina fisheries. The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission chose to adopt all ASMFC FMPs as North Carolina rules through an Interjurisdictional Fishery Management Plan (IJ FMP). Striped bass is one of the species included in the IJ FMP.

## Process

The ASMFC has determined that changes to the existing management program for Atlantic striped bass are necessary to meet the goals of the FMP and has developed a draft addendum to address these changes. An addendum is used to adapt components of the management program to changing circumstances within the fishery. It differs from an amendment in two key ways:

- It is a shorter process with one round of public hearings, and
- it generally addresses a few specific management measures being proposed.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to inform the public of issues under consideration by the ASMFC and any potential impacts to North Carolina's fisheries so that the public has opportunity to comment on:

- Changes observed in the fishery;
- Actions that should or should not be taken in terms of management, regulation, enforcement, research, development and enhancement; and
- Other concerns about the resource or the fishery.

Input received at the start of the amendment development process can have a major influence in the outcome of the final amendment.

## Current Management

North Carolina has managed the Atlantic striped bass fishery under the ASMFC's Atlantic Striped Bass FMP since 1981. North Carolina also has a separate state FMP for this species in state internal waters. The joint, Marine Fisheries Commission/Wildlife Resources Commission N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass FMP was revised in 2004. The addendum under consideration only applies to the ocean (coastal migratory) stock that is managed through the ASMFC FMP.

Amendment 6 established biological reference points (BRPs) to define overfished and overfishing status. Overfished status is defined by a threshold female spawning stock biomass (SSB). Spawning stock biomass refers to the weight of mature female fish in the population. The threshold SSB is the minimum weight of adult females needed to maintain the population. The target female SSB is set above the threshold SSB and is a level that is ideal to maintain the future population while allowing fishing activities to occur. Overfishing is defined as exceeding a threshold fishing mortality rate. The target fishing mortality rate is one that will maintain an age structure for long-term sustainability. The BRPs form the basis for management responses.

Most recreational fisheries are constrained by a two-fish creel limit, 28-inch minimum size limit and year-round fishing season, except in spawning areas. Commercial striped bass fisheries are constrained by minimum size limits and state-by-state quotas.

## North Carolina Management

North Carolina manages the commercial Atlantic Ocean striped bass fishery with a minimum size limit of 28 inches and an annual total allowable catch (TAC) of 480,480 pounds. North Carolina commercial landings have averaged 407,726 pounds since a TAC increase of the 2002/2003 season. North Carolina chooses to allocate its quota on a seasonal basis, from December 1-November 30. The fishery is prosecuted with three gears: beach seine, gill net, and trawl. Each sector is allocated one-third of the TAC, while overages in any one sector are deducted from that sector's TAC the following season. Daily landing limits are utilized in an effort to ensure each sector stays under its TAC.

## Status of the Fishery

In 2008, the recreational fishery harvested an estimated 2.05 million fish coastwide (25.69 million pounds), compared to the 2007 harvest of 2.19 million fish (22.58 million pounds). Recreational releases decreased by more

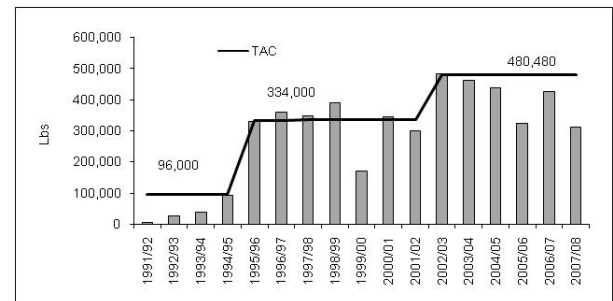
than 5 million fish to 11.85 million fish, for an estimated 1.07 million dead discarded fish (9 percent of releases).

The commercial fishery landed an estimated 1.01 million fish coastwide (7.19 million pounds) in 2008, compared to the 2007 harvest of 1.02 million fish (7.05 million pounds).

## North Carolina Fishery

Atlantic striped bass are usually found in the near-shore waters of North Carolina from December through February and early March, at which time they begin their spring migration to spawning sites in the Chesapeake Bay, Hudson Bay, and Delaware Bay. North Carolina has not met its full TAC since the 2003/2004 season. Milder winters and warmer ocean water temperatures have kept Atlantic striped bass farther north, with fewer fish in N.C. coastal waters where they are available for harvest. Since the 2004/2005 season North Carolina has averaged landings 105,205 pounds below the TAC.

Figure 1. North Carolina commercial harvest and total allowable catch (TAC) of striped bass in the Atlantic Ocean, 1991/92 through 2007/08 seasons.



## Summary of the Problem

In May 2009 the Striped Bass Management Board voted to initiate Addendum II to address roll over options for unused commercial quota. The existing management program for Atlantic striped bass addresses coastal commercial quota overages, requiring payback of excessive harvest in the subsequent year, but it is silent on coastal commercial quota underages. Since the implementation of Amendment 6, coastal commercial quota underages have been more common than overages.