



## Maryland Department of Natural Resources STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT



### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

#### *Why is Maryland changing management for striped bass in 2020?*

The 2018 benchmark stock assessment for striped bass indicated declines, so the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has determined that conservation measures are needed for the 2020 fishing season. ASMFC is a management entity comprising 15 member states on the East Coast, including Maryland.

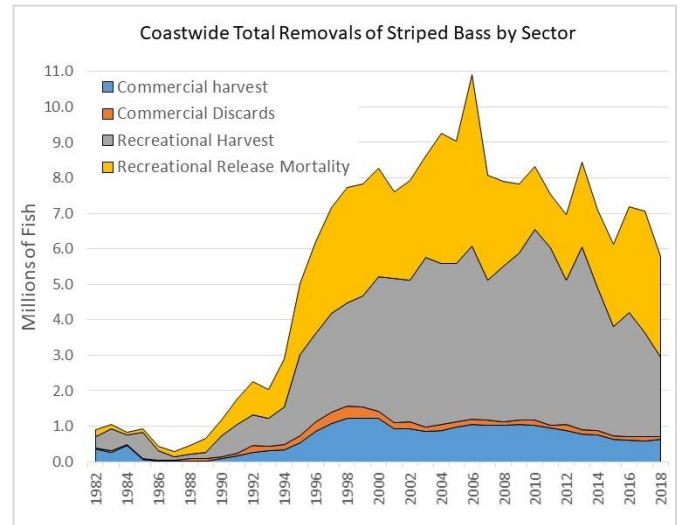
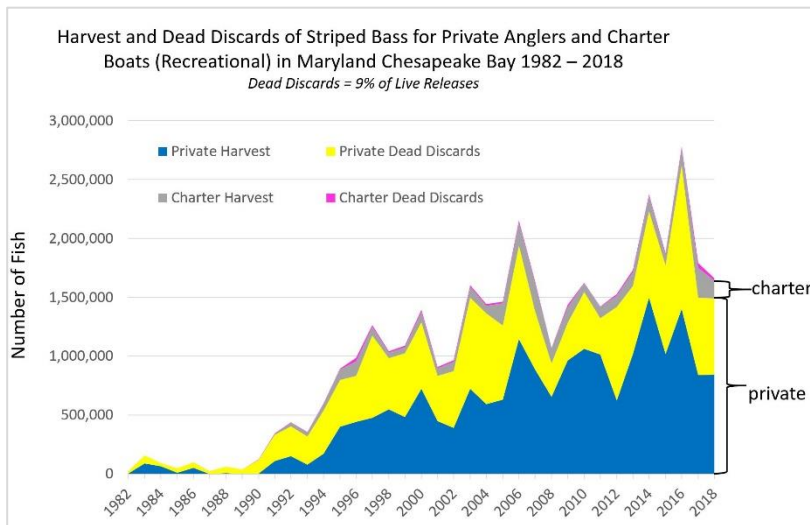
Through [Addendum VI to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Striped Bass](#), the ASMFC set a target to reduce the coastwide total removals of striped bass by 18% from 2017 levels. Action must be taken by each state by the 2020 fishing season.

#### *What does it mean to reduce total removals – isn't that the same thing as harvest?*

The goal is to reduce the total number of striped bass that are killed by fishing activities. This means reducing the number of fish that are harvested AND the number of fish that die after being caught and returned to the water, known as dead discards. According to ASMFC, the bulk of the coastwide striped bass fishing mortality comes from discards by recreational anglers.

Maryland sees the required management change as an opportunity to reduce discard mortality and to expand protection for large migratory fish as they pass through the Maryland portion of the Bay to the spawning grounds.

DNR also sees this as an opportunity to improve reporting and collect more accurate data so we can better understand the status of our population in the Bay and along the coast. In the future, additional studies may be needed on striped bass spawning, mortality, and migration.



#### *How has Maryland started addressing this?*

In 2018, DNR raised concerns about the problem of discard mortality with ASMFC. This resulted in the adoption of a decreased minimum size from 20 to 19 inches. In addition, Maryland took unilateral action to require the use of circle hooks when chumming and live lining (the methods by which most recreational anglers catch striped bass.) Circle hooks are an effective conservation measure because they significantly reduce “gut hooking” that leads to discard mortality. The department also launched and is continuing to expand a statewide educational outreach program to assure compliance with these regulations.

### How does Maryland plan to reduce total removals?

Maryland has proposed four plans that will provide equivalent conservation to the option prescribed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Addendum VI. The Addendum option would require Maryland to implement a 1-fish bag limit and an 18-inch minimum size. No changes to the seasons would be necessary. The following four equivalent options were submitted based on public comment and Maryland's goals to decrease dead discards and increase protection for pre-spawn females migrating to the spawning areas. The minimum size for these options is 19 inches, and for options #1 - #3, the creel limit is two fish per person per day except as modified in August and September as noted in the table. These options have been approved by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Technical Committee but are pending approval by the Striped Bass Management Board in February.

Management Action	Options with % Reduction			
	#1	#2	#3	#4
<b>All Season</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prohibit extra fish kept for charter captain</li> </ul>	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08
<b>Spring Season</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Closure) March 1-April 30; no targeting</li> </ul>	1.28			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Closure) April 1-30; no targeting</li> </ul>			0.64	0.64
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delayed start of trophy season to May 1</li> </ul>	4.18	4.18	4.18	4.18
<b>Summer Season</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Closure) July 5-31 (27 days); no targeting</li> </ul>	9.91	9.91		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Closure) July 10-31 (22 days); no targeting</li> </ul>			8.07	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Closure) Aug. 16-31 (16 days); no targeting</li> </ul>				5.03
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May 16-Dec. 10; 1-fish bag limit for private angler/2-fish bag limit for charter (requires use of FACTS electronic reporting)</li> </ul>				9.99
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aug. 1-31; 1-fish bag limit</li> </ul>	3.46	3.46		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aug. 1-Sept. 30; 1-fish bag limit</li> </ul>			5.85	
<b>Winter Season</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Early Closure) Dec. 1 from Dec. 15 (15 days)</li> </ul>		3.13		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Early Closure) Dec. 7 from Dec. 15 (9 days)</li> </ul>	1.88		1.88	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Early Closure) Dec. 11 from Dec. 15 (5 days)</li> </ul>				0.84
<b>Total Reduction: Goal of 20.6%</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>20.8</b>

### Did the department already decide on management actions for the spring? When can the public weigh in on any of this?

DNR's plan will include conservation measures throughout the 2020 season. Due to the regulatory calendar, the department had to submit part of our proposed regulations to the Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review Committee by November 15, 2019 in order for them to be in effect by spring 2020. The public comment period for the spring proposed regulations opened on December 20, 2019 and closed on January 21, 2020. A summary of the spring proposals is available on our website at [dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries](http://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries).

ASMFC will give final approval to state's plans in February. At that point, DNR will submit a separate package of proposed regulatory changes for the summer and winter 2020 season. Once the regulations are submitted, a public comment period on the proposed changes for the summer and winter 2020 season will begin. The department will have at least one public hearing to take public comment on these proposed measures.