



Emilie Franke
FMP Coordinator
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 N. Highland Street Suite 200
Arlington, Virginia 22201

4/17/23

RE: Initiating an Addendum to Ensure the Striped Bass Stock Successfully Rebuilds by 2029

Dear Ms. Franke,

The American Saltwater Guides Association (ASGA) is a coalition of fishing guides, fishing related businesses, and conservation minded private anglers. Our members on the Atlantic coast are reliant on a healthy population of striped bass. ASGA has engaged on every striped bass management issue in a meaningful and productive manner since our inception. Today, we believe that the striped bass fishery is at an inflection point: if action is not taken at the upcoming May meeting, the stock will not rebuild by 2029 and drastic measures may become warranted.

It is clear that some areas experienced excellent striped bass fishing last year. The good fishing translated into over 35 million pounds of striped bass harvested coastwide¹. ASGA [had deep concerns](#) that the slot limit would fully exploit the robust 2015-year class. These concerns are now a reality. The 2015-year class is the last robust recruitment year. While the 2017 and 2018-year classes are average, there are four consecutive years of the lowest recruitment in recent history following. This leaves the stock and those that depend on a healthy striped bass population in a very dangerous place.

Amendment 7, which was just approved and implemented in May 2022, clearly states that the stock must be rebuilt within 10 years (Striped bass was declared overfished in 2019 thus the rebuilding deadline is 2029).²

2.7.2 Stock Rebuilding Schedules

If at any time the Atlantic striped bass population is declared overfished and rebuilding needs to occur (as specified in Section 4.1 Management Triggers), the Board will determine the rebuilding schedule at that time. The only limitation imposed under Amendment 7 is that the rebuilding schedule is not to exceed 10 years.

The current rebuilding plan has failed. The 2022 MRIP harvest numbers showed that harvest doubled and decreased the probability of rebuilding to 14%. The probability is considerably lower if commercial transfers are approved as per the Technical Committee meeting on March 30th. This is unacceptable to our community and clearly violates Amendment 7's rebuilding provisions. Taking a correction now is far better than draconian measures in a few years.

¹ Personal communication from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division April 12, 2023.

² Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fisheries Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass. May 2022. https://asmfc.org/uploads/file/63cb1c52AtlStripedBassAm7_May2022.pdf

Delaying action in May would represent a complete failure of the Striped Bass Management Board to address known issues with the striped bass rebuilding plan.

We are asking only that the Striped Bass Management Board follow the rules it established. A new rebuilding plan that has a minimum of a 50% chance of success must be initiated, and those regulations need to be in place by the 2024 season.

ASGA and the undersigned anglers, fishing guides, and businesses are calling on the Striped Bass Management Board to initiate Addendum II to Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass, ensuring the striped bass stock successfully rebuilds by 2029.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Friedrich', written in a cursive style.

Tony Friedrich
Vice President and Policy Director
tony@saltwaterguidesassociation.org
(202) 744-5013

CC: Bob Beal, ASMFC Executive Director
Martin Gary, Striped Bass Management Board Chair