



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Striped Bass Management Update:

Opportunity for Public Comment on Upcoming Management Board Decisions
in Response to 2024 Stock Assessment Results

Today, we are writing to update you about one of the most popular fisheries in Massachusetts and the entire east coast of the United States, striped bass. As you likely know, striped bass have been under a rebuilding plan since 2019, leading to increasing management over the past five years. Last month, the most recent stock assessment conducted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) was released; [this report](#) sheds light on the ability of the current coastwide management program to rebuild the stock. Unfortunately, the results of the update are not all promising and **there is the prospect of additional striped bass fishery restrictions in the coming years, possibly even in 2025.**

On the positive side, the biomass of mature female fish in the population (which is used to determine stock status) has been increasing since 2018, although it is still slightly below the level needed to stop referring to the stock as “overfished.” Additionally, the restrictions implemented in 2020, 2023, and 2024 were successful in lowering fishing mortality to target levels. Based on these results, management changes are not mandated under the interstate fishery management plan. However, there is concern about whether the current management program will lead to stock rebuilding in the face of expected population trends over the next five years.

First, fishing mortality is expected to increase in 2025–2026 as the 2018 year-class, the only above average group of recruits since 2015, grows into harvestable size in the ocean recreational fishery. While this is a short-term effect, individual years of overfishing can jeopardize the stock’s positive trajectory. After 2025–2026, there will likely be a longer-term negative effect from the past six years of very low juvenile production from the major spawning grounds in the Chesapeake Bay estuary. The lack of strong year classes recruiting into the fishery may require a lower rate of fishery removals in the years ahead.

After reviewing these results in October, the ASMFC’s Striped Bass Management Board decided to schedule a [special meeting on December 16](#) to further review the need and options for new regulations in 2025. In the interim, the Management Board’s scientific advisors will review the most recent catch estimates for 2024, update their range of scenarios for where the stock could be headed, and analyze several types of additional management measures for possible coastwide management action. This information will be made available in a technical report by early December.

Before the Management Board meeting occurs on December 16, there will be **an informational [webinar](#) for the public on December 5 to review the technical report.** While public comment will

not be accepted *during* the informational webinar, written public comment on the technical report and possible management futures is encouraged. The deadline for submitting written public comment for the Management Board's consideration is **December 10** (see email address listed below). Per the Management Board's request, the technical report is expected to focus on management options that include changes to the recreational size limits or seasons and commercial quotas.

Quick Links for More Information

- [ASMFC Announcement about Stock Assessment Results](#)
- [ASMFC Announcement about December 16 Striped Bass Board Meeting and December 5 Public Information Webinar](#)
- [Link to Register for December 5 Public Information Webinar](#)
- [Webpage where the Technical Report will be posted by December 3](#)
- [Email address to submit written public comment by December 10](#)
- [2024 Stock Assessment Report](#), and [Additional Appendices](#)

Thank you for your continued interest in Massachusetts' fisheries and striped bass. The Division looks forward to working with you to find options to support a strong striped bass population in the future while providing opportunities to pursue these magnificent fish. You can contact MA DMF by email at marine.fish@mass.gov.