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Marine Fisheries Advisory

**Notice of ASMFC Public Hearing:
Proposed Measures to Address Illegal Striped Bass Harvest**

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) will host an Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission public hearing on Atlantic Striped Bass Draft Addendum III. The date, time, and location are:

June 5, 2012; 7 PM
Hanover High School
287 Cedar Street
Hanover, Massachusetts
Contact: Nichola Meserve, 617-626-1531

The Draft Addendum proposes implementing a mandatory commercial tagging program for all states or jurisdictions with commercial striped bass fisheries and increasing penalties for illegally harvested fish. These options are intended to help prevent commercial striped bass quota overages and the illegal harvest of striped bass, both of which have the potential to undermine the sustainability of striped bass populations and reduce the economic opportunities of commercial fishermen who are legally participating in the fishery. Options under consideration in the implementation of a tagging program include, but are not limited to, who applies the tags and when, how many tags a state can distribute and whether unused tags must be returned, whether tags are standardized among all states, and how long affixed tags are to stay in place.

The Draft Addendum responds to recommendations of the Interstate Watershed Task Force (IWTF). The IWTF conducted a multi-year, multi-jurisdictional investigation on illegal commercial striped bass harvest within Chesapeake Bay which resulted in over \$1.6 million dollars in fines levied against 19 individuals and three corporations for more than one million pounds of illegal striped bass harvested estimated to be worth up to seven million dollars. The investigation revealed that some of the control measures in place for regulating the harvest of striped bass were ineffective or inadequately designed to maximize compliance. The investigation also found that greater accountability of wholesalers would be difficult to achieve without uniform tags (colors, design) and tagging requirements, valid year and size limits inscribed on tags, and increased dealer compliance education.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum either by attending the public hearing or providing written comment. The Draft Addendum is available on the Commission website (www.asmfc.org) under Breaking News or by contacting the Commission at 703.842.0740. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on July 13, 2012 and should be forwarded to Kate Taylor, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or ktaylor@asmfc.org (Subject line: Atlantic Striped Bass Draft Addendum III).

Note that *Marine Fisheries* is holding another hearing the same evening at 5:30 PM in Bourne on emergency regulations pertaining to the v-notching of lobsters in Southern New England, and recreational rules for scup, black sea bass, fluke, and Gulf of Maine cod in 2012 (see: <http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dmf/marinefisheriesnotices/pubhearings.htm> for more information). Public comment on these issues will also be collected at the Hanover hearing.