



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

(617) 626-1520 | www.mass.gov/marinefisheries



MAURA T. HEALEY
Governor

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
Lt. Governor

REBECCA L. TEPPER
Secretary

THOMAS K. O'SHEA
Commissioner

DANIEL J. MCKIERNAN
Director

May 24, 2023

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Striped Bass Regulation Change Effective Friday, May 26

On May 26, 2023, the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries will enact emergency recreational regulations to change the maximum length limit for keeping striped bass in Massachusetts. **The new recreational slot size is 28" to less than 31"**, and anglers will still be permitted to keep one fish per day. DMF will host a virtual public hearing on this action on June 21, 2023, at 6PM (see [Notice](#)). The regulation reflects changes to the coastwide management of striped bass. The Division of Marine Fisheries has published a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document to help anglers understand what the new regulations are, why action was taken, and what can be expected for striped bass in the coming years.

For the past several years, the recreational length limit has been 28" to less than 35". In 2022, the recreational harvest of striped bass nearly doubled, making it necessary for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to immediately change regulations to conserve striped bass and meet rebuilding goals. On May 2, 2023, the ASMFC Striped Bass Management Board voted to take an Emergency Action to change the regulations in the hopes of reducing harvest on an especially important group, or year-class, of striped bass that were born in 2015.

The 2015 year-class is critically important to the future of striped bass because it is one of the few large year-classes that has been produced in the past two decades. Striped bass are long-lived and can reproduce more than 20 times over their life span. This reproductive capability evolved to compensate for years when the weather or other factors would lead to low survival of their young. Since 2005, survival of newborn striped bass has been mostly below average, including the past four years which are among the lowest recorded. With fewer surviving striped bass born in the years before and after 2015, it is important for as many bass from the 2015 year-class to grow to spawning size and have as many opportunities to reproduce as possible.

The reduced slot limit should help protect fish from the 2015 year-class. The increase in striped bass recreational harvest that prompted the rule change was a result of the 2015 year-class growing to a size where they could be harvested. Based on Division of Marine Fisheries sampling, this group of striped bass composed more than half of the recreationally harvested fish in Massachusetts in 2022. In 2023, striped bass born in 2015 should have an average size of about 31 ½" in length. Data suggests that the new 28" to less than 31" slot along the coast will protect more than half of the 2015 year-class from recreational harvest in 2023 (compared to zero protection with the 28" to less than 35" slot). This level of protection will increase in future years as these striped bass continue to grow.

The ASMFC Striped Bass Management Board also voted to initiate a new rule-making process that could bring more changes to recreational and commercial fishing for striped bass in 2024. For further information, please contact marine.fish@mass.gov.