

February 28, 2020

Jason McNamee, Ph.D.
Chief of Marine Resource Management
Rhode Island Division of Marine Fisheries
3 Ft. Wetherill Road
Jamestown, RI 02835

Dear Dr. McNamee,

I write today to urge you to implement a 28-35" slot limit for the striped bass recreational fishery in Rhode Island. As you know, the ASMFC Striped Bass FMP Addendum VI process has resulted in the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York all choosing to implement a 28-35" slot limit. I believe that a consistent recreational size limit among as many coastal states as possible enhances the likelihood of achieving the conservation goals of Addendum VI. A common theme during the Addendum VI public comment period was a desire for consistent inter-state regulations. Such consistency facilitates angler education and compliance, and avoids perceptions of inequity and unfairness. Were Rhode Island to adopt the alternative 32-40" slot limit it has proposed, Connecticut anglers fishing in Rhode Island waters would be restricted to harvesting striped bass within the narrow size range of 32-35". Further, the 30-40" slot limit proposed for Rhode Island's party/charter boat sector would place for-hire businesses in neighboring states at a competitive disadvantage. I believe that such inequity will only serve to erode public confidence in the ASMFC management process.

I am also concerned about the implications of regional regulatory inconsistency for enforcement. During the Addendum VI process, the ASMFC Law Enforcement Committee expressed concern about the enforcement challenges that would result from different size limits among neighboring states. I commonly hear from recreational anglers that there is a pressing need for more effective enforcement of striped bass regulations. I therefore do not wish to see our region move towards disparate regulations that will make enforcement more challenging than it already is.

For the reasons cited above, I urge you to maintain consistency with your neighboring states and ASMFC partners. I fully understand the challenges of implementing harvest reductions in a fair and equitable manner for a high profile, multi-faceted fishery like striped bass. The Addendum VI process has been arduous and at times contentious for all parties involved; ultimately, I think the ASMFC process will be best-served by maintaining the coastal consistency which has been a hallmark of the previous successes of the striped bass management program.

Sincerely,



Justin Davis, Ph.D.
Assistant Director, CT DEEP Fisheries Division