

BLUEFISH ACTION (from page 26)

Finally, accountability will make the council take a more risk-averse approach to bluefish. Why? Because if the rec sector goes over the 9 million pound harvest in 2020, there will be pound for pound paybacks in 2021.

If we are going to 3 fish in 2020, can you imagine the cuts in 2021 if we have to payback? You see, if sectors are actually penalized for overfishing, (note Maryland getting away with murder for striped bass) then the managers actually do the right thing the first time.

Finally, there is accountability for the Councils. If they break the rules, they can be sued. If ASMFC breaks the rules, well, it is just another Tuesday.

ASMFC AND CONSERVATION EQUIVALENCY

Now, how do you feel about all that talk regarding **conservation equivalency (CE)** being a good thing? Can states manage fisheries better than Magnuson?

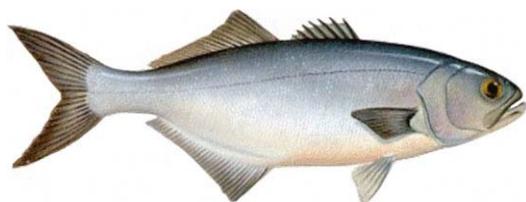
When you see the stark difference between the swift action taken on bluefish and the slow motion carnival unfolding for striped bass, we don't need to say much more.

Conservation equivalency is being used in the wrong manner. States are subject to wild administration swings. If one state has a new Governor and that Governor decides to do whatever it takes to harvest more (Governor Hogan in Maryland), the rest of the coast will pay the price.

That doesn't seem fair, does it? This is why you can't allow a state to have too much power (CE) when dealing with migratory stocks. You want to manage largemouth bass, go for it! Striped bass should be managed with a better framework.

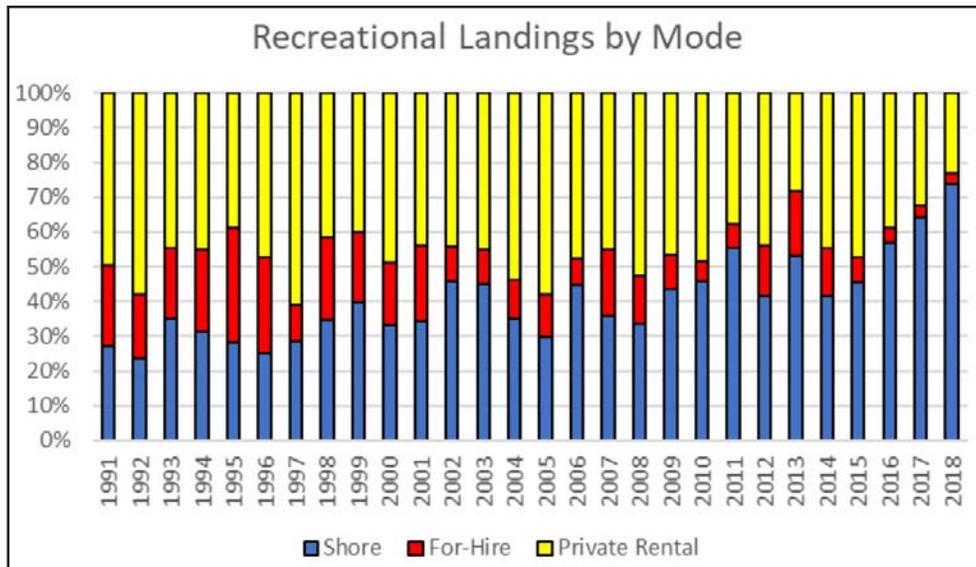
When ten year rebuilding timelines are mandatory. When pound for pound paybacks are in effect. When limits are coast wide and not a hodgepodge of insanity to thinly veil the desire to kill more fish. When swift action isn't a choice, it is a requirement. Well...then and only then can you look at management action and say, "You know what, this might actually work."

Looks like we might be catching decent numbers of bluefish again in the next few years. Too bad we aren't so sure about striped bass.



BLUEFISH ACTION TAKEN AT THE MID-ATLANTIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL DECEMBER MEETING

On December 10, the MAFMC dealt with the required 28% reduction in the coastwide catch of bluefish, which is managed through the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), and not by the states via ASMFC.



Shown above are one of the important graphs viewed during the bluefish presentation.

The graph showing bluefish catch by mode show that the average coastwide landings percentage from 2016-2018 by mode was:

For-Hire: 3.6%
Private Boat/Shore Anglers: 96.4%

POSSIBLE OPTIONS & SELECTION

A set of four options was presented to the Council, each of which would achieve the required minimum 28.56% reduction.

Alternative	Mode	Bag Limit	Size (inches)	Reduction by Mode
1	All Modes	3	0	28.78%
2	For-Hire	4	17	28.61%
	Shore and Private Angler	3	0	29.14%
3	For-Hire	5	19	28.75%
	Shore and Private Angler	3	0	29.14%
4	For-Hire	6	21	30.02%
	Shore and Private Angler	3	0	29.14%

The presentation noted that, "Due to the vast majority of landings coming from the private/shore modes, staff recommended a 3-fish bag limit for the private/shore mode and a 5-fish bag limit for the for-hire mode to achieve the necessary 28.56% reduction in harvest. This includes no size limit.

Finally, the motion that passed was Option 3 which would give **Shore and Boat Anglers a 3-fish** per day bag limit with no minimum size and the **Party/Charter Boats a 5-fish** per angler bag with a 19-inch minimum size.