



Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association  
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

# The Watch

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Chairman



The RISAA Legislative Committee's mission is to provide, in partnership with the Affiliated Clubs, a forum for improving the knowledge and understanding of fishery-related and government issues that affect recreational anglers. An informed membership encourages involvement and advocacy. The Legislative Committee will strive to advocate responsible fishery decision.

The Committee is comprised of RISAA Members and delegates from the Affiliated Clubs. The Committee meets two or three times a year, depending on the number of fishery and/or legislative issues that develop.

## Legislative Committee is looking out for you

We are starting a new year and now is the time that we need to plan if 2021 will be a successful fishing season. Hopefully everyone cleaned and greased all of your reels before putting them away for the winter and you will all be checking your tackle to see what needs fixing and how many rigs need to be made, etc.

### FISHERIES REGULATIONS IN RI

But, we also have much work to do on the policy and regulatory side of things. If you are reading this before January 5 please join the RIDEM Zoom workshop on Recreational Regulations for the 2021 season and make your feelings known.



To join meeting go to:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86215775099>.

RISAA is going to push for:

- An earlier opening for black sea bass (June rather than July) to allow recreational anglers to keep a few during the early season when these fish are in shallow water.
- Propose a measure to help preserve the breeding stock of tautog by reducing the number of large tautog that may be kept.

### REGIONAL FISHERIES REGULATIONS

During this winter period we must also pay close attention to regional and federal regulations such as the issue that commercial quotas for fluke, sea bass, cod and other species have been increasing because of changes in the way that the National Marine Fisheries estimates Recreational catch.

I have written about this before, but basically, because changes in the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) have led to retroactive increases in the estimated recreational catch for many species of nearly 100%, these allowed commercial fishing quotas to increase dramatically.

In the case of fluke for example, this has led to a substantial decrease in the availability of fluke for near-shore recreational fishers. Since these changes in estimated recreational catch are projected back for more than 20 years, it makes sense to consider changing the allocation of quota between recreational and commercial fishers because the current allocations were based on catch estimates that have now been changed.

**The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) jointly manage many of the species we fish for in the Northeast including summer flounder, scup, bluefish and black sea bass.**

This is why the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) are **developing a joint amendment to reevaluate and potentially revise** the commercial and recreational sector allocations in the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan.

Information on this process is at <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/sfsbsb-allocation-amendment> . I urge you to watch this process carefully and join in to make comment when available stating that reallocation to increase the recreational share of total quota makes sense based on the way that MRIP changes have affected the previous estimates.

It also is helpful to keep an eye on regional meetings, such as the one that the Mid-Atlantic Council just concluded in December. As can be seen at <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/december-2020-council-meeting> this meeting addressed recreational regulations for 2021 in the scup, black sea bass, and bluefish fisheries.

I haven't yet seen a report on what came out of these meetings, but it will definitely affect recreational fishing in southern New England this year.

### STRIPED BASS & CIRCLE HOOKS

The Legislative Committee has been active protecting you as recreational fishermen in many other ways. For example, while we support all reasonable restrictions to help the recovery of striped bass, the new requirement for circle hooks may go further than necessary by banning the use of J-hooks on tube and worm and parachute jigs while trolling. These methods do not result in deep hooking fish and therefore are not causes of substantial mortality.

We signed a letter asking ASMFC to reconsider this aspect of the circle hook requirement and we ( Legislative Committee) met with **Nicole Lengyel-Costa** from RIDEM to discuss this requirement. A copy of the letter that we signed is included in this RISAA Newsletter. As stated in the letter, we believe that creating a prohibition such as this on J hooks in tube & worm rigs does not help the fish, but does serve to undermine the confidence of fishermen in the regulations.

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