Striped Bass: We Got Mad. Now Let’s Get It Right

by CHARLES WITEK

It’s probably not news to anyone who pays attention to what’s going on up and down the coast, but a lot of striped bass fishermen weren’t happy with what went on at the February meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board.

The comments started coming in right after the Management Board meeting.

One observer made the wry observations that, “49 different choices on conservation equivalency were submitted, many of which the technical committee straight out said could not be modelled…”

“Several Commissioners went on record calling out the [conservation equivalency] bullshit, one saying, ‘We agreed to a size limit at the last meeting, while right then and there a number of you sat in the back of the room trying to figure out how to then work up an alternative conservation equivalency in your state.’

“Accountability was voted down. Yes, read it twice if you have to. The idea of paying for what you eat (and penalties for overages) was handily defeated. Note to self—never invite these types out to dinner and expect them to split the bill fairly…”

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...And that pretty much sums up the process of ASMFC this week.

It was a pretty good, and remarkably polite, description of what went on.

Many other folks expressed anger and/or disappointment. On one website devoted to striped bass fishing, people listening in on the Management Board meeting kept up a running commentary, making statements such as

• “unbelievable [sic]. Are we trying to conserve the fish here or the wallets of those that profit off their harvest.
• “Solid job to the people at the ASMFC. They really need to go, every single one of them,”
• “And now we’ve avoided accountability. I’ve lost all respect for the ‘August Body.’ They should all be ashamed of themselves. Time for NOAA to manage striped bass, it’s beyond the abilities of these pikers.”

In the wake of the meeting, there were many more comments of that kind, but they began to taper off after a few days. At that point, Maryland and New Jersey came out with their final rules, and the conversation grew more specific.

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