RISAA Member News

by Lynn Medeiros

The purpose of this column is to pass along information and milestones within the membership. Birthdays, anniversaries, events or get-well wishes are all in order. We also let members know of the passing of other members.

CONGRATULATIONS

to

DAWN AND GARY JOHNSON

who celebrated their 22nd Wedding Anniversary on April 25.

GET WELL

We extend get well wishes to **Dick Geldars's** wife, **Carole** who underwent surgery recently.

CONDOLENCES

We extend our deepest sympathies to **BOB and JULIE LeBLANC** and their children, at the loss of Bob's dad, **Lester LeBlanc**, 79, on April 12 in Ocala, FL.

CONDOLENCES

We are sorry to report the loss of member

DR. JOHN J. VIETAS

age 79, of Fall River, MA on January 11.

John was an orthodontist in Dartmouth for over 48 years. He was a RISAA member for the past 9 years and loved fishing, history and cooking. We extend our sympathies to his wife Natalie, their six children and all his friends.

Parents don't frame pictures of thier kids playing video games.....

TAKE THEM FISHING!

STRIPED BASS MORTALITY (from page 5)

Such a 200,000 fish savings would amount to a 42% reduction in landings, which is significant, despite the price paid in additional release mortality.

Again, those numbers are only an approximation. Some people argue that, if the size limit were raised, anglers would fish longer, and end up releasing more fish, in order to land their one "keeper." If they did so, the argument goes, release mortality would spike, and minimize the benefits of a higher size limit.

While there may be a small kernel of truth in such argument—some people would fish longer and so release more bass than they would if the size limit were lower—it's extremely doubtful that the number of such anglers would be high enough to cause significant harm, since most striped bass anglers don't fish primarily for meat; **a very substantial majority of the striped bass caught are already returned to the ocean rather than killed**.

During the five years between 2014 and 2018, New York anglers caught more than 17,000,000 striped bass, but only kept a little over 2,500,000—less than 15%—of those fish. Which means that more than 85% of all striped bass caught in New York were let go.

Clearly, all of those releases weren't optional—quite a few of the released bass would have been undersized. But the percentage of fish released has remained fairly consistent, and without any clear trend, from year to year, even though the proportion of undersized to legal fish would have changed annually as various year classes moved through the population.

Thus, in 2014, anglers kept more than 22% of their catch—the high for the time series—but one year after, in 2015, retained fewer than 10% of all bass landed. A year later, New York's striped bass anglers landed more than 15% of their catch. Such seemingly random fluctuations are best accounted for by the level of error inherent in the data, rather than significant changes in actual retention rates—the 15% average is probably a good approximation of the proportion of striped bass killed.

In such a catch-and-release fishery, it's not likely that too many anglers stop fishing after they keep their one-bass daily limit, although a few may do so. On the other hand, there are certainly unscrupulous anglers who "highgrade," keeping the first legal fish that they catch, and then dumping it over the side, at best badly stressed and more probably dead, when they land a larger one. (It should be noted that in some fisheries, such as the king salmon fishery on Alaska's Kenai River, anglers may catch and release fish as long as they like, but as soon as they decide to keep one, they must take their line out of the water and not fish for the rest of the day, in part to prevent just that sort of behavior). A higher minimum size would help to limit such misconduct, and thus partially offset whatever additional release mortality such higher minimum might cause.

So when we look at the numbers, we need to remember that it's not the release mortality, standing alone, that matters—although, for the sake of the fish and ourselves, we should always do our best to keep that number down.

What matters is the fishing mortality rate, and its contribution to the rate of mortality from both fishing and natural causes.

Given that truth, an incremental increase in discard mortality might be a small price to pay for a far bigger decrease in the overall number of striped bass that die.