



The Watch

Doug MacPherson, 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.

ASMFC SUMMER MEETING

I want to remind anyone interested that the next meeting of the Legislative Committee will be held on September 17. It seems like long time from now, but when you read this it will be already the middle of August with time racing on. Any member interested in joining this committee (which deals with fisheries management, public access, government legislation and advocacy) should contact me by email at MacPherson@risaa.org.

Striped Bass - Center Stage



The results of commissioner votes at the August summer meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will be an important indication of future decisions.

The most important vote for most of us will be what decisions are made regarding how to deal with the striped bass “overfished/overfishing occurring” issue indicated by the most recent stock assessment.

There is a strong consensus among conservation-minded fishing groups that Amendment 6, the current plan used for striper management, be kept in place with appropriate conservations measures to reduce striped bass mortality.

A tabled motion from

their last meeting in April was a vote to initiate a new addendum with an already stated goal

possibly changing some of key biometric which could put the recovery of striped bass in serious danger, allowing the continued overfishing to occur.

Changing (lowering) key limits such as Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) will allow more fish to be caught instead of rebuilding the stock.

It is interesting to note that should be held to Addendum 6, they are not actually required by federal statute to take that action. They are not bound by Magnuson-Stevens specified goals and that most commissions are influenced by political pressure. The ASMFC’s voting state commissioners extend from Maine to Florida and all measures require a two-thirds majority vote to be adopted. You can pretty well imagine how coastal interests and species concerns can change from state to state.



Black Sea Bass and Summer Flounder

Also of interest to many recreational anglers will be new actions and reports taken with regard to black sea bass and summer flounder. This includes a Progress Update on the Recreational Management Reform Working Group and an update of management strategy evaluation of the Summer Flounder Recreational Fishery Project.



As a result of the new assessments of recreational catch and effort, indicating the recreational catch was considerably higher than data had previously indicated, and with 2019 fast approaching, the decision was to freeze the recreational coast wide limits to status quo. We need to stay alert to what I am certain will be a changing situation for recreational anglers going into the new year.

Black Sea Bass - We Need You to Advocate

On a local note, despite strong efforts to get an earlier opening date for Rhode Island’s recreational black sea bass fishery, we were once again given a late-June opening and told that no compromise was possible to get an earlier date.

(Personal note: I caught my first legal size black sea bass in the third week of May in Narragansett Bay and returned a 17" fish to the water.)

We need to see more turnout from recreational anglers at the Rhode Island Marine Fishery Council meetings and workshops when they meet to make recommendations for consideration in the new season. This RISAA newsletter and our www.RISAA.org web site always have the schedules and you can also get dates and agenda information on the Rhode Island DEM website.



I can’t believe that with a season that runs to December 31 and a bonus increase in bag limit that jumps from 3 fish to 7 fish on September 1 we can’t find a compromise to allow recreational fishers in the bay more opportunity to keep a BSB in the spring. We need many more voices to be heard on this subject to show it is a concern of recreational participants. (to page 26)