

To: Maryland Sports Fish Advisory Commission
Dated 1/23/15

Distinguished SFAC committee members,

The Solomons Charter Captains Association (SCCA) and our coalition partners respectfully request your consideration regarding these alternative proposals for the 2015 Chesapeake Bay Trophy Striped Bass Season regulations. The current proposal being discussed by Maryland DNR would allow recreational anglers to keep one Striped Bass at 36" or greater per person. We believe this targets the very fish ASMFC and Maryland anglers are trying to protect.

Biological studies show approximately 70-80% of all Striped Bass 36" or greater are female and play a vital role in the successful reproduction rates of Striped Bass. These studies also indicate approximately 50% of the Striped Bass between the sizes of 28-36" are males. We believe these alternative proposals help to reduce the harvest of the large spawning stock females. Our research indicates very few Striped Bass over 44" will be harvested under these proposals. Our intent is to allow Maryland anglers the opportunity to catch a once in a lifetime fish or perhaps a new State record Striped Bass while targeting the predominately 28-36" male fish. By targeting the smaller male fish we can do our part to help the female Striped Bass SSB flourish. In past discussions with Secretary O'Connell and DNR staff we believe these proposals for the 2015 Chesapeake Bay Spring Trophy season will meet the reduction criteria imposed by ASMFC and save the larger spawning females. Additionally, our proposals will allow for the Spring Rockfish Tournaments to be held while mitigating the impact on the larger female Striped Bass population.

Secondly, the socioeconomic impact of the current 36" proposal will be enormous to many within the fishing community. Many other states under ASMFC jurisdiction have offered conservation equivalency proposals that allow for fish to be kept at a minimum of 28". We believe the Maryland Charter Industry will lose customers to those other states under the current 36" proposal. Hotels, Restaurants, Tackle shops, Marinas and everyone that benefits from Maryland's Spring Striped Bass season will see a negative economic impact from the 36" minimum proposed regulation.

Our proposals for your consideration:

- 1 fish per person: 1 Striped Bass per person of 28-36" of which 1 per boat may be over 44".
- 1 fish per person: 1 Striped Bass per person of 28-36" or 1 Striped Bass per person over 44". Anglers may keep 1 fish 28-36" or 1 fish over 44" to attain their 1 fish per person limit.
- 2 fish per person: 1 Striped Bass per person of 28-36" and 1 Striped Bass over 44".

2015 Summer Striped Bass season

DNR has also proposed an increase in the Chesapeake Bay summer Striped Bass season (May-Dec) size minimum from an 18" minimum to 20". The Maryland DNR has indicated an expected mortality rate of ~10% for fish caught and released during the summer months. Anglers catching and releasing hundreds of fish per day to attain one that meets the 20" minimum will inadvertently kill thousands of juvenile Striped Bass during the summer season. Targeting 20" fish within Chesapeake Bay we believe goes against the intent of ASMFC's reduction mandate. Fish that are 20" constitute a majority of the strong YOY from 2011. These fish are the future generations of the SSB. We believe it's prudent to continue with the 18" minimum size. To attain the required AFMFC percentage reductions we would advocate a closure of 2-3 weeks during the summer months in Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake Bay. Our belief is there are other species available to anglers during the closure period. The economic impact of such a closure can be mitigated by anglers having the ability to target other species.

We appreciate your consideration of these proposals and look forward to a 2015 Striped Bass season that helps improve the Striped Bass fishery for all stake holders.

Respectfully,

Capt. Wally Williams
President Solomons Charter Captains Association (SCCA)
Signed for; SCCA coalition partners