Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: **Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

FROM: **Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel**

DATE: **January 24, 2023**

SUBJECT: **Advisory Panel Recommendations on Draft Addendum I Options**

The Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel (AP) met via webinar on January 17, 2023 to discuss AP recommendations on the proposed options in Striped Bass Draft Addendum I to Amendment 7 regarding ocean commercial quota transfers. ASMFC staff provided the AP with an overview of the draft addendum background, proposed options, and public comment summary.

AP Members in Attendance

Louis Bassano (Chair, NJ recreational)
Dave Pecci (ME for-hire/recreational)
Peter Whelan (NH recreational)
Patrick Paquette (MA recreational)
Craig Poosikian (MA commercial)
Andy Dangelo (RI for-hire)
Michael Plaia (RI comm/rec/for-hire)
Bob Danielson (NY recreational)
Eleanor Bochenek (NJ fisheries scientist)
Leonard Voss (DE commercial)
Chris Dollar (MD recreational)
Charles (Eddie) Green (MD for-hire/rec)
Dennis Fleming (PRFC rec/processer/dealer)
Bill Hall (VA recreational)
Kelly Place (VA commercial)
Jamie Lane (NC commercial)
Jon Worthington (NC recreational)

Bob Humphrey (ME comm./for-hire) and Jamie Lane (NC commercial) provided comments via email, which are incorporated into this summary.

ASMFC Staff: Emilie Franke

Public Attendees: Marty Gary (Striped Bass Management Board Chair), Will Poston, Jaclyn Higgins, Erik Zlokovitz

A majority of AP members support status quo Option A (no transfers permitted), while some AP members support Option B (transfers permitted with overfished conservation tax). The following is a summary of AP members' recommended options, discussion, and additional recommendations.

Proposed Management Options

14 AP members support the status quo **Option A**: no transfers permitted for the following reasons:

- Considering transfers is not appropriate while the stock is overfished and rebuilding.
- The public comments are overwhelmingly in support of Option A.
- Transfers will not benefit the stock in any way, especially when the stock is overfished or overfishing is occurring.
- There shouldn't be any increase in either sector's harvest while the stock is overfished.
- Concern that quota transfers set up the potential for behind-the-scenes or non-transparent 'horse-trading'.
- The only quota likely available for transfer is the North Carolina quota since fish have not been available there inshore; as long as the stock is overfished, we need the buffer of not harvesting that quota.
- If quota is transferred north, large breeding females would be taken out of the fishery.
- A striped bass caught in southern state commercial fisheries is not the same size as striped bass caught in northern state commercial fisheries. There is concern around moving quota from an area that harvests smaller fish to an area that harvests larger fish (i.e., losing more spawning potential). Moving quota along the coast will disrupt the current rebuilding analysis and assumed size of commercial catch.
- The stock is experiencing recruitment failure in the Chesapeake Bay, so this is a time for caution and conservation.

4 AP members support **Option B**: transfers permitted with overfished conservation tax for the following reasons:

- Quotas were developed by science, and the science would not set total quotas that would jeopardize the stock.
- The commercial fishery already is already constrained and closely monitored with payback and accountability provisions in place.
- The striped bass fishery is primarily recreational, and the commercial fishery has been diminished to 10% of total removals with low, relatively stable landings; allowing transfers would not have a significant, if any, impact on the status of the stock since the commercial fishery is at such low levels.

There was no support stated for Options C, D, or E.

Additional Recommendations

Some AP members noted additional recommendations regarding the quota transfer process:

- If the Board does allow transfers, 3 AP members recommend the Board eliminate the 45-day provision that would allow transfers to occur up to 45 days after the calendar year ends. This type of provision could lead to states being less careful about exceeding their quota since they could cover a quota overage after the year ends through a transfer.

- 3 AP members recommend that if transfers are permitted, transfers should be permitted only for states that allow commercial fishing; states that prohibit commercial fishing (ME,NH,CT,NJ) should not be able to transfer their quota.
- 1 AP member recommends revising the quota utilization calculation to exclude states that do not have commercial fisheries. Currently, the percent quota utilization is calculated incorporating those states (e.g., Maine landed 0% of their quota), which seems wrong since those states have chosen not to allow commercial fishing.

If the Board maintains status quo and doesn't allow transfers through this addendum, AP members were split on whether transfers should/shouldn't be considered in the future:

- Some AP members support revisiting the issue of quota transfers in the future after the stock is rebuilt, as that would be more appropriate timing.
- Some AP members don't support revisiting the transfer issue in the future (i.e., transfers should not be allowed in any case) because transfers are not an appropriate tool for the striped bass fishery.
- Some AP members noted uncertainty about whether transfers should be considered in the future. When the stock is rebuilt, quota transfers could be a tool to respond to climate change and shifting stocks along the coast, but only if controlled and regulated properly.

Some AP members noted recommendations regarding the commercial quota system in general:

- 3 AP members recommends the Board re-examine the overall commercial quota system since it is based on outdated data from the 1970s; science has advanced since then and the quota system should be re-evaluated.
- 1 AP member recommends the Board take a broader perspective and re-examine the contribution/value of each sector (commercial and recreational) and their contribution to the striped bass fishery overall.