



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board Webinar Summary

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board
March 16, 2021

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Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

ATLANIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MARCH 16, 2021)	2
<i>Meeting Summary</i>	2
<i>Motions</i>	3

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MARCH 16, 2021)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to consider recommendations from the Circle Hook Ad Hoc Committee regarding a definition of bait and method of fishing that would require the use of circle hooks, as well as consider how to handle incidental catch of striped bass when targeting other species with non-circle hooks.

Addendum VI mandates the use of circle hooks when fishing with bait to reduce release mortality in recreational striped bass fisheries. In October 2020, the Board approved state circle hook implementation plans with the caveat that no exemptions to the requirement would be permitted. Since then, the Commission and several states have received questions and comments from the public about differing interpretations of the circle hook requirement, as well as concerns that requiring circle hooks for some fishing methods which incorporate bait would be unnecessarily restrictive and provide little conservation benefit. The Board created the Circle Hook Ad Hoc Committee in February 2021 to address and provide recommendations on the following tasks related to the Addendum VI circle hook requirements: 1) develop a definition of bait that would require the use of circle hooks; 2) identify methods of fishing that would require the use of circle hooks; 3) discuss how to handle incidental catch of striped bass when targeting other species with non-circle hooks.

The Board reviewed the Ad Hoc Committee's report and recommendations on the three tasks. For Task 1 on the definition of bait and Task 2 on the methods of fishing, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended specific language to the Board. The recommended language defined bait requiring a circle hook as "any marine or aquatic organism live or dead, whole or parts thereof" and provides an exemption for any artificial lure with bait attached. There was general agreement among Board members that this recommended language reflects the intent of the circle hook requirement. Some Board members suggested modifying the language to only exempt single hook artificial lures, but after discussion the Board maintained the original language for all artificial lures. Some Board members also expressed concern that the recommended language does not include terrestrial worms or organisms as part of the bait definition, but Board members noted states can implement a more restrictive definition of bait if they choose. The Board approved the Committee's recommended language on the definition of bait and methods of fishing that require circle hooks.

For Task 3 on how to handle incidental catch of striped bass when targeting other species with non-circle hooks with bait attached, the Ad Hoc Committee could not reach consensus and presented the Board with two options: Option A would allow anglers to keep incidentally-caught striped bass and Option B would require anglers to release incidentally-caught striped bass. Some Board members expressed initial support for Option A for reasons including that requiring release would go beyond the mandate of Addendum VI. The Board asked Law Enforcement Committee members to explain their reasoning for supporting Option B and the law enforcement officers reiterated that requiring release of incidentally-caught striped bass is the best means to provide enforceability of the measure. The Board approved guidance

requiring release of striped bass that are incidentally caught via the following language: “Striped bass caught on any unapproved method of take must be returned to the water immediately without unnecessary injury.”

Board members emphasized the importance of angler outreach and education in implementing the approved measures. Board members asked Commission staff to describe the state requirements as a result of the Board action. Commission staff stated that the bait and method of fishing definitions are a clarification of the Addendum VI provisions and are compliance criteria for the states. The guidance on incidental catch adopted by the Board is not required to be implemented by the states, however states are encouraged to implement the measures to greatly improve enforceability of the circle hook provisions.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke efranke@asmfc.org, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at 703.842.0740.

Motions

Main Motion

Move to approve the following guidance for state implementation of circle hook measures for the recreational fishery: circle hooks are required when fishing for striped bass with bait, which is defined as any marine or aquatic organism live or dead, whole or parts thereof. This shall not apply to any artificial lure with bait attached.

Motion made by Mr. Armstrong and seconded by Dr. Davis. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

Motion to Amend

Motion to amend to replace “as any marine or aquatic organism live or dead, whole or parts thereof” with “the living or dead, whole body or part of a body of an animal, or a processed product from an animal or vegetative source”.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion fails (1 in favor, 11 opposed, 1 null, 2 abstentions).

Motion to allow anglers to keep striped bass that are incidentally caught.

Motion made by Mr. Abbott and seconded by Mr. Fote. Motion fails (2 in favor, 11 opposed, 2 null).

Move to approve the following guidance for state implementation of circle hook measures: Striped bass caught on any unapproved method of take must be returned to the water immediately without unnecessary injury.

Motion made by Mr. Reid and seconded Mr. Armstrong. Motion passes (12 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 null).