

Striped Bass Emergency Action

NJ Fish and Game Council

July 11, 2023

Striped Bass Emergency Action

- ASMFC took emergency action to protect large 2015 year class and promote stock rebuilding
- NJ current freshwater size limit = 1 fish 28" to less than 38"
- Emergency regulations = 1 fish at 28" to 31"
 - No change to seasons
 - No change to SBBP (1 fish 24" to less than 28" with permit)
- Implemented in NJ marine waters July 2, 2023
 - All other Atlantic coast states also in compliance
- Request Fish and Game Council implement in freshwater regions
- Non-compliance will result in a moratorium for all NJ striped bass fisheries

Stock status and recent harvest

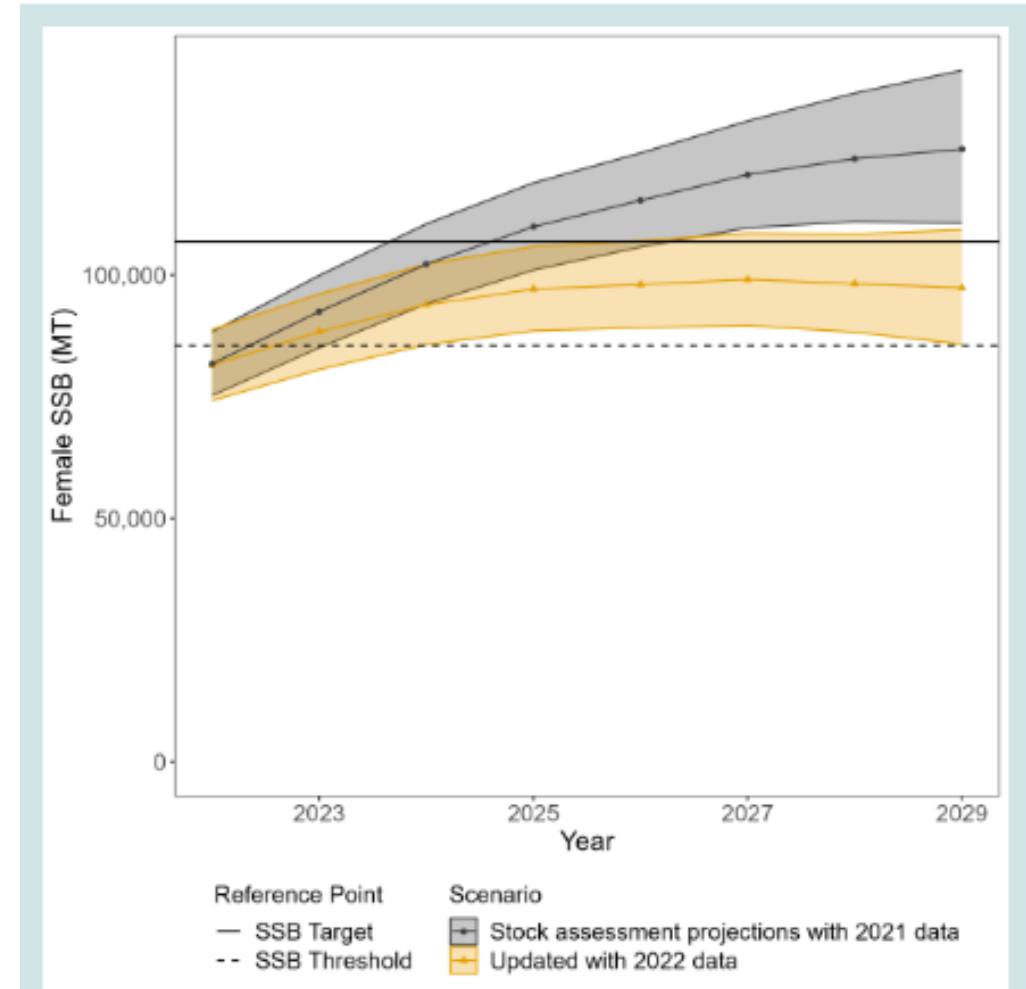
- Stock Assessment Update (2021 data)
 - Overfished but no longer overfishing
 - Projections: 97% probability of rebuilding stock by 2029

	Target	Threshold	2021 Value	Status
Female Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB)	235 million lbs	188 million lbs	143 million lbs	Overfished
Fishing Mortality (<i>F</i>)	0.17	0.20	0.14	Not overfishing

- 2022 MRIP estimates – 38% increase in recreational removals relative to 2021
 - 88% increase in recreational harvest
 - 3% increase in recreational live releases
 - Significantly affects rebuilding scenario

Stock rebuilding projections

- Stock rebuilding projections estimate the probability of rebuilding spawning stock biomass (SSB) to target
 - Assumes constant fishing mortality (F) each year through 2029
- When F₂₀₂₁ is applied, 97% probability of rebuilding by 2029
- When F₂₀₂₂ is applied, less than 15% probability of rebuilding by 2029



Stock rebuilding projections using 2021 data (from 2022 assessment update) and 2022 data.

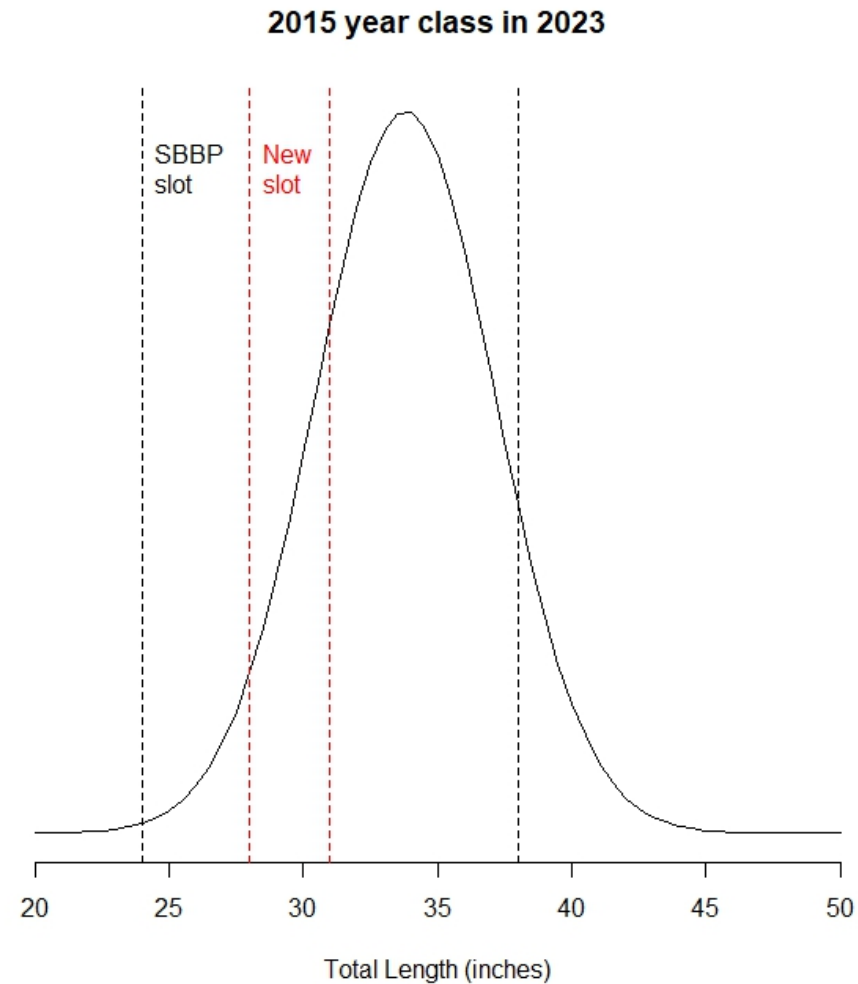
May 2023 ASMFC Board Meeting

- Addendum II:
 - Initiated to develop measures for 2024 to reduce F to F target
 - Board vote: All in favor
- Emergency Action (EA):
 - Implement 31" maximum size limit for recreational fisheries with a higher (or no) maximum size, excluding Chesapeake Bay trophy fisheries
 - 1 fish at 28" to less than 31"
 - Conservation Equivalency (CE) proposals not allowed
 - SBBP will not change. Remains: 1 fish per permit at 24" to less than 28"
 - Effective for 180 days: May 2 to October 28, 2023
 - Can be extended up to one year
 - All other recreational measures remain the same (bag limits, seasons, etc.)
 - SBBP can not be changed.
 - Board vote: All in favor, except NJ.

Justification for EA by the Board

- ASMFC IFMP charter states Emergency Action can be taken when: “those circumstances under which public health or the conservation of coastal fishery resources or attainment of fishery management objectives has been placed substantially at risk by unanticipated changes in the ecosystem, the stock, or the fishery.”
- Justification:
 - Must rebuild SSB to the target level by 2029
 - 2022 recreational harvest nearly doubled from 2021
 - New stock projections
 - Very low probability (15%) to rebuild to SSB target by 2029
 - Intent to reduce harvest of strong 2015-year class to support rebuilding
 - 4th largest in history
 - Age-8 in 2023 with average length around 31”-32”
 - EA 31” maximum intended to protect a larger portion of the year class
 - Important role in rebuilding SSB by 2029
 - Recruitment in recent years has been below average; 2015’s are one of few strong year classes

Distribution of the 2015 Year Class



MFC Striped Bass Committee & Advisors

- MFC expressed concern with the process (May 11, 2023)
 - No rigorous technical review
 - No public comment
 - No evaluation of economic impacts
- MFC Striped Bass Committee and advisors (June 1, 2023)
 - Similar concerns as full MFC
 - Reduced slot limit would be useful for rebuilding
 - Moratorium is not acceptable
 - Recommend implementing new slot to remain in compliance and avoid moratorium
- MFC public comment (June 20, 2023)
 - Frustration with process
 - In favor: Good for the stock; moratorium not acceptable
 - Opposed: Economic impacts; fishing has never been better
- MFC vote: 5-2 in favor of implementing emergency regulations

Next steps

- Notice of Administrative Change signed by Commissioner; implemented 7/2
- ASMFC currently developing Addendum 2 to evaluate a range of options
 - Pre-emergency regulations
 - Emergency regulations
 - Others
- Preferred timeline
 - Draft expected in August
 - Public comment in Aug-Oct
 - Final ASMFC decision in Oct
 - Implementation in Jan 2024
- Emergency regs expire in late October, but can be renewed if Addendum is behind schedule
- Depending on Board decision, may be back in 6 months to revise again

Council decision

- Request Fish and Game Council implement ASMFC emergency regulations in freshwater regions
- 1 fish at 28 to 31"
- No change to season
- No change to SBBP