**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FISH AND WILDLIFE**

**Notice of Administrative Change Marine Fisheries**

**Modification of Atlantic Striped Bass Fillet Possession Limits and SBBP Quota**

**N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.1 & 18.13**

**Take Notice** that, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.1(p), the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (Commissioner), with the approval of the New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council (Council) at its March 7, 2024, meeting, has modified the recreational fillet possession limits and the Striped Bass Bonus Program (SBBP) quota for Atlantic striped bass. The actions for Atlantic striped bass have been taken to comply with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (ASMFC) management plan, and for the optimal utilization of available Atlantic striped bass quota.

On January 24, 2023, the ASMFC Stiped Bass Management Board (Board) approved minimum requirements for recreational at-sea filleting to address concerns about recreational filleting allowances and compliance with recreational size limits. The measures require racks to be retained and possession to be limited to no more than two fillets per legal fish. At the same meeting, the Board also approved a 7 percent reduction in the coastwide commercial striped bass quota to achieve the fishing mortality target in 2024 and to support rebuilding spawning stock biomass by 2029. Historically, New Jersey reallocates its commercial quota to the SBBP through conservation equivalency. The Board approved New Jersey’s conservation equivalency proposal to allow the commercial striped bass quota to be transferred to the bonus program, including a 7 percent reduction in the striped bass Bonus Program quota. (https://asmfc.org/uploads/file/65c54740AtlStripedBass\_AddendumII\_Am7\_Jan2024.pdf).

In accordance with the ASMFC’s actions, the Council approved changes to recreational Atlantic striped bass fillet possession limits and the SBBP quota consistent with the ASMFC’s Atlantic Striped Bass Interstate Fishery Management Plan. The Council approved the possession to be no more than two per legal fish possessed for Atlantic striped bass and striped bass hybrids. The Council also approved a 7 percent SBBP reduction from 215,912 to 200,798 pounds.

These changes will be reflected in the Fish and Wildlife rules at N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.1(c). As required in N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.1(p), changes to N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.1 will be published in the New Jersey Register, the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife Marine Digest, and on the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife website.

**Full text** of the changed rule follows (additions indicated in boldface **thus**, deletions indicated in brackets [thus]):

7:25-18.1 Size, season, and possession limits

(a) – (e) (No change.)

1. Special provisions applicable to a Special Fillet Permit are as follows:
   1. – 2. (No change.)

3. The Special Fillet Permit shall be subject to the following conditions:

i. x. (No change.)

**xi. No more than two fillets per legally caught striped bass or striped bass hybrid shall be possessed by any individual while at-sea.**

1. – (r) (No change.)

7:25- 18.13 Striped bass bonus program

(a) – (*l*) (No change.)

(m) The quota described in (*l*) above shall be [215,912]**200,798** pounds until such time as another quota is duly promulgated by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. A portion of this quota will be allotted to party and charter boats.

(n) – (p) (No change.)

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Date Shawn M. LaTourette, Commissioner

Department of Environmental Protection