



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

March 7, 2024

The Honorable County Commissioners of Kent County
R. Clayton Mitchell, Jr. Kent County Government Center
400 High Street
Chestertown, MD 21620

Dear Kent County Commissioners,

Thank you for passing along your concern to me regarding the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) vote on Addendum II to modify striped bass recreational and commercial management measures in 2024. The more restrictive commercial quota, recreational slot limit, and one fish catch limit will impact commercial striped bass permit holders and portions of the recreational fishery, including the charter boat operators in Maryland.

In January, the ASMFC Striped Bass Board voted on and approved these actions in light of information that identifies the coastwide population of spawning female fish as overfished. This is an issue that the Department has been tracking and discussing with all stakeholders in Maryland through regular meetings with the Tidal Fish Advisory Commission and the Sport Fish Advisory Commission. Furthermore, the 2022 fishing mortality estimates indicate that mortality on striped bass exceeds a level that will allow the stock to rebuild to the 2029 target levels, as agreed to and defined in the Fishery Management Plan, a critical component to the State's sustainable fisheries strategy.

In addition, reproductive success has been below average for the last five years in the Chesapeake Bay and other nursery areas along the coast as demonstrated by data collected in the annual [Juvenile Index](#), or "Young of Year Survey." Given these grim statistics facing the fishery in Maryland's waters and along the Atlantic coast, the Commission recognized that strong measures were needed for implementation in the 2024 season.

Maryland's representation on the ASMFC Board is composed of three Commissioners: Lynn Fegley/proxy Mike Luisi represents DNR as the state agency charged with conservation of fisheries resources, one is a legislator (Delegate Stein/proxy David Sikorski), and one is selected by the governor for a three-year term (H. Russell Dize/proxy Robert T. Brown, Sr.). At the January 2024 Board meeting, Mr. Michael Luisi, Director, Tidal & Coastal Management and Science Branch, DNR offered numerous amendments, as can be found [here](#), intended to maintain for 2024 the two fish catch limit for charter boat captains among other changes that would have mitigated economic impacts this season; each of these amendments was rejected by the Board.

Maryland's compliance with ASMFC's decisions on Addendum II is important for the protection of this incredibly important commercial and recreational fishery in Maryland. Failing a compliance review by the Commission could lead to a full striped bass commercial and recreational moratorium implemented by the Secretaries of the United States Secretaries of Commerce and Interior.

Please know that I am working tirelessly with my staff in Fishing and Boating Services to identify opportunities to mitigate the social and economic impacts that these rule changes will have on the commercial and recreational fishing industry, business owners and all Marylanders, while also successfully managing the conservation and sustainability of striped bass, Maryland's State fish.

Thank you again for directing your concerns to me. If you have any follow up questions or if we can help clarify anything please call or email Michael Luisi, Director, Tidal & Coastal Management and Science Branch, at 443-758-6547 or michael.luisi@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josh Kurtz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Josh Kurtz
Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

cc: Governor Wes Moore
The Honorable Stephen S. Hershey
The Honorable Jay A. Jacobs
The Honorable Steven J. Arentz
The Honorable Jefferson L. Ghrist