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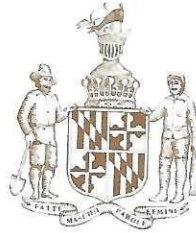
Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Motor Vehicles and Transportation

Natural Resources, Agriculture,
and Open Space

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 1238-Fisheries-Striped Bass-Closed Season

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Today I am presenting HB1238 which adds an additional 1 month to the no target time for striped bass in conjunction with the recent emergency regulation 23-312E.

In November 2023 the Department of Natural Resources submitted a plan that repeals the 2024 recreational and charter boat spring trophy season for striped bass and also repealed early summer and fall season for striped bass in the Susquehanna Flats, Susquehanna River, and the Northeast River from May 16, 2024, through May 31, inclusive; and extends the period during which a person is prohibited from targeting striped bass hybrids in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries during the 2024 season.

The reason for this action is to reduce the mortality on the spawning striped bass stock biomass. Maryland typically has its greatest access to the striped bass spawning stock during the spring spawning season.

This is an especially sensitive period for spawning striped bass, which are dependent on several environmental conditions to have a successful spawn. Due to declines in the spawning stock biomass and poor recruitment of juvenile fish over the last 5 years, actions have been taken both at the state level and at the coast wide level to reduce mortality on those fish.

With the winters becoming warmer the last several years which causes the water temperature to be warmer, the spawning females are heading to the spawning areas earlier than past migrations. Since spawning activity is temperature driven,

there is evidence that these spawning females are headed to the spawning areas sooner than normal.

The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are the primary spawning and nursery area for 70 to 90% of the Atlantic Coast stocks.

According to DNR's fishery goals, as far as recruitment goes, the goal is to protect spawning females and avoid increased interference with spawning behavior and mortality.

With the closure of Trophy season and the Susquehanna areas, who knows how many anglers will turn their attention to the catch and release season which is open prior to the April 1st no target closure? There are pictures virtually everyday on social media with people holding up a 30,40, 50-inch striped bass for a photo as if it were a trophy. Virtually all these size fish are spawning females. They are in many cases brought out of the water and handled improperly and ultimately become sick or die.

All this being said, my ask is simple, for the good of the spawning females. That the no target date be moved from April 1st to March 1st if there is no trophy season to give these fish a clear path to the spawning areas to hopefully have a very successful spawn and ultimately improve the juvenile stock in Maryland to ensure a more robust fishery in the future.

I ask for a favorable vote for HB1238.

Maryland's Juvenile Striped Bass Index

Arithmetic Mean (AM) Catch per Haul

