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**RECREATIONAL ANGLERS
WORKING TO CONSERVE, PROMOTE, AND ENHANCE MARYLAND'S
MARINE RESOURCES**

3/4/2020

To: Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chairman
Honorable Dana Stein, Vice Chairman
Honorable Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: HB 1397 - Recreational Striped Bass Fishery – Study on Harvest Data

CCA Maryland Position: Support

As Maryland's largest recreational fishing organization, and a longtime participant in cooperative fisheries management actions in Maryland and beyond, CCA Maryland fully supports this proposed legislation to direct the Department of Natural Resources(DNR) to identify methods for improvements in obtaining accurate recreational catch data on Maryland's striped bass fishery.

Striped bass, aka Rockfish, are a long-lived, anadromous species, which means they return from the ocean each year to their natal rivers to spawn. As the Atlantic coast's largest estuary, the Chesapeake Bay acts as a vital nursery ground for striped bass, spawning more than 70% of the coast wide population.

As a migratory species, striped Bass are collectively managed by the states from Maine through North Carolina through an interstate compact called the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission(ASMFC). The ASMFC is a deliberative body which ensures the conservation and management of 27 nearshore fish species. This management structure provides opportunity for cooperative management amongst the numerous states throughout any single species' migratory range, and consistency in conservation measures, under a species-specific interstate fisheries management plan. A key to the success of any ASMFC fisheries management plan, is the accuracy of data which drives statistical models which estimate overall population of each species, and are often reliant upon the catch and effort of recreational anglers in deriving these estimates. According to NOAA, the striped bass fishery is estimated to be the nation's largest recreational fishery (in lbs.), meaning it is both a challenge and necessity to have an accurate understanding of recreational fishing impacts on the striped bass population, and properly assess the overall population status.

At this time, striped bass populations are estimated to be below desired population targets, and all states with striped bass fisheries are enacting regulatory action to limit the impact of fishing on the striped bass stock in 2020 and beyond. These actions can only reliably conserve the striped bass resource, if accurate harvest information is used in crafting regulations.

Given the value of the striped bass resource and fishery to Maryland citizens, and the importance of the Chesapeake Bay as a nursery ground for coastal striped bass populations, it is of the utmost importance that DNR develop a report of their current efforts to manage the recreational striped bass fishery, and develop, fund, and implement improved systems in the near future to ensure that accurate and timely information is available to benefit all striped bass fishery stakeholders, and most importantly the striped bass population for years to come.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable vote on HB 1397 *For further discussion regarding this issue, please contact CCA Maryland Executive Director David Sikorski – (443)621-9186 – david@ccamd.org*