

GUEST COMMENTARY: Bass bill endangers both fish and fishermen

**By Bruce Peters
Cape Codder**
Posted Mar 05, 2010 @ 12:35 PM

EASTHAM — As a 16th generation Cape Codder, commercial striped fisherman, and recreational charter boat captain, I oppose state Rep. Matt Patrick's new striped bass bill. He supports Stripers Forever, a Maine-based recreational fishing group that seeks to eliminate commercial striped fishing. The group argues that the economic value of the striped bass is worth more as a recreational-only fishery, that commercial fishers are harvesting too many breeding-sized fish, and that the current fishery management process is a failure.

Their bill, besides eliminating the sale of all wild caught stripers in Massachusetts, proposes to reduce the daily catch of recreationally caught striped bass from two daily to one fish, and reduces the minimum size from the current 28 inches to a range limit of 20 inches to 26 inches or more than 40 inches. They base these biological recommendations upon a Stripers Forever membership survey (SF Web site December 2009) of 906 members, 69 percent of whom feel fishing is "worse" or "much worse."

Here are a few striper facts: According to a table, "Removals by Fishery Component, 2006" by the Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission's Striped Bass Technical Committee, the recreational sector caught 79 percent (4,846,876 fish) of the stripers, leaving 21 percent (1,071,240 fish) to be sold into the markets by the commercial sector.

WICKEDLOCAL BusinessDirectory
SEARCH TODAY

Search for:

In City or Town:
All

The Massachusetts commercial harvest is limited to an annual quota of a set amount of pounds. If it is over-harvested, the amount is deducted from the next year's allocation. Female striped bass mature between the ages of 5 and 7 years, at a size range of 24 to 30 inches. Massachusetts uses the current 28-inch size limit to ensure that at least 80 percent of these 6-year-old fish are of spawning age (and size) before they are harvested. Even at the maximum of the proposed Patrick/Stripers Forever bill, 20- to 26-inch-size limit, less than 20 percent of female stripers would be mature enough to spawn before they are harvested.

Lastly, the ASMFC's latest report (2009) on the Status of the Striped Bass biomass, states: "The striped bass stock complex is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The SCA model estimates a low fishing mortality rate (F), stable spawning and total biomass, and a slight increase in population numbers following a recent four-year decline."

This bill (H796) will not conserve striped bass, as it proposes to harvest them before they are of spawning size. The bill will imperil and penalize the summer charter boat and tourist industry and cost Cape Cod and Barnstable County jobs and revenue. Although many of the SF survey respondents report not being able to catch a legal 28-inch bass in Cape Cod Bay and in the waters around Chatham, we have a hard time finding anything smaller than that. Their proposed changes would ruin Cape Cod as a recreational striper fishing destination.

We should not be managing this fishery with political methods, based solely upon limited anecdotal evidence reported by an out-of-state-based fishing club. What is more important, though, and is missing from any dialogue, is that these fish belong to *all* residents of the commonwealth, and not just to those with fly rods and center console fishing boats. If the resource is declared "healthy and not overfished," and there is enough stripers for the recreational sector to accidentally kill (discard) from their efforts, dead and unused, an amount double the entire commercial quota, (2,072,334 fish), then surely there is enough for our moms, neighbors and friends to go buy a fresh bass fillet at the market.

Cape and Islands state Sen. Robert O'Leary is a member of the committee now considering House Bill 796. If you wish to comment, e-mail him at Robert.O'Leary.state.ma.us

Tools

Print

Comment

ShareThis

Bruce Peters lives in Eastham.

☼ Loading commenting interface...

Thank you for your loyalty.
To show our appreciation, check out these special offers.



▶ [Click Here](#)

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| Site Services | Market Place | Community Info | Links | Submit content | Lifestyle |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Newsletter sign up • Buy photo reprints • E-edition • Subscribe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs • Classifieds • Cape Cod Homes • Nantucket Homes • Rentals • Cars • Dating • Businesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather • Tides | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find your town • WickedLocal.com | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement • Wedding • Anniversary • Birth • News tip • Obituary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cape Cod fun • Movies • Music • Stage • Galleries • National Seashore |

[Contact us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

Wicked Local - Cape Cod | 5 Namskaket Road Cape Cod, MA 02638

Copyright © 2006–2010 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a [Creative Commons license](#), except where noted.

SEO by [eLocalListing](#) | [Advertiser profiles](#) | [Cherrp Local](#)