



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Marine Resources Commission

Building 96

380 Fenwick Road

Fort Monroe, VA 23651

Matthew J. Strickler
Secretary of Natural Resources

Steven G. Bowman
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Patrick Geer, Chief of Fisheries

pat.geer@mrc.virginia.gov, 757-247-2236

“Striped Bass Bonus Fish Program”

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) will not implement the Striped Bass Bonus Fish Program as suggested under 2019 management actions for Striped Bass

“Given the present circumstances, it would not be prudent to initiate a program that harvests the spawning stock.” said Commissioner Steven G. Bowman. **“We’d be better served protecting the large females until we reduce fishing pressure and ensure a healthy population for current and future generations of anglers”.**

The VMRC had planned to develop a program where anglers could purchase one tag per year to harvest a single trophy sized fish larger than the legal limit (> 36”). These measures were planned to come before the Commission for review in June 2020. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has initiated a new amendment to address the overfished condition of striped bass. Upon reviewing scientific advice related to that amendment, MRC decided implementing a bonus tag program for striped bass could be damaging to the stock given the status of the population. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the Commission to re-evaluate priorities as well as any new unfunded projects.

Staff have been directed to explore incorporating striped bass into the existing Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program to gather additional information on movements, habitat preferences, and growth rates of the striped bass spawning stock. This program was established in 1995 as a partnership between VMRC and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and has tagged over 250,000 fished with over 28,000 recaptures in its 25 year history (<https://www.vims.edu/research/units/centerspartners/map/recfish/>).

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Telephone (757) 247-2200 (757) 247-2292 V/TDD Information and Emergency Hotline 1-800-541-4646 V/TDD