Striped Mullet Fishery Management Plan Amendment 2

Summary

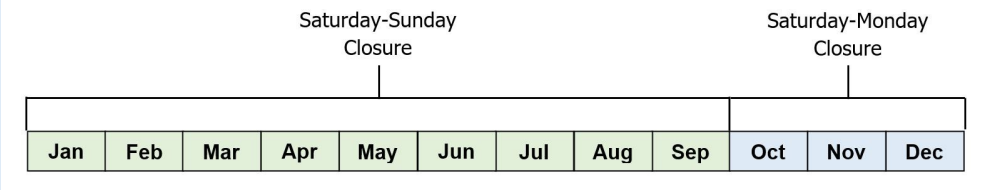
The North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) adopted Amendment 2 to the Striped Mullet Fishery Management Plan at its May 2024 business meeting. The 2022 stock assessment determined the Striped Mullet stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring. A 21.3-35.4% reduction in commercial removals is needed to rebuild spawning stock biomass to a sustainable level.

The goal of Amendment 2 is to manage the striped mullet fishery to achieve a self-sustaining population that provides sustainable harvest using science-based decision-making processes. To ensure this goal is met, the MFC adopted management projected to achieve a conservative 34.9% reduction in commercial removals for the fishery. Amendment 2 management is projected to achieve sustainable harvest within 10 years with at least a 50% probability of success.

Commercial Fishery and Adaptive Management

- Implement a 11:59 P.M. Friday through 12:01 A.M. Monday commercial harvest closure from January 1 through September 30 and a 11:59 P.M. Friday through 12:01 A.M Tuesday closure from October 1 through December 31.
- Day of week closures apply to the stop net fishery. Consistent with current management, the stop net fishery will open no sooner than October 15 and close no later than December 31. All other stop net and associated gill net regulations will be set by proclamation consistent with, but not limited to, previous management.
- Adaptive management allows for adjustments to season closures, day of week closures, trip limits, and gill net yardage or mesh size restrictions to help ensure management targets are being met, based on results of stock assessment updates, concerning stock conditions or fishery trends.
- Adaptive management allows restrictions to be relaxed once the stock recovers.

Timeline showing commercial fishery day-of-week harvest closure schedule.





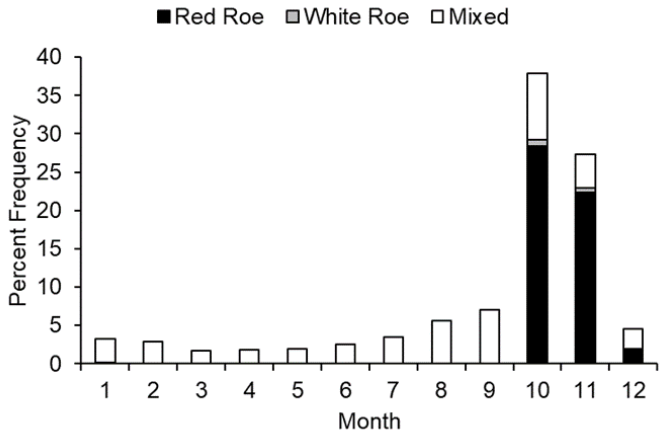
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Rationale

The commercial striped mullet fishery primarily targets female fish for their roe as they migrate through inlets to spawn in the ocean during the fall. Stock recovery is highly dependent on recruitment, and the stock assessment indicates recruitment has been below average since 2009. Because of this, Amendment 2 management preferentially protects striped mullet during the final three months of the year, when commercial landings peak and spawning fish are aggregated and most vulnerable to harvest.

Amendment 2 implements day-of-week commercial harvest closures, with a Saturday-Sunday closure from January-September, and a Saturday-Monday closure from October-December. Because the commercial roe season is condensed into a short period, limiting the number of days open to harvest is projected to effectively reduce harvest. Consecutive daily closures allow fish to move into the ocean where they are less vulnerable to harvest, ensuring more fish have a chance to spawn.



Percent frequency of striped mullet commercial landings by market grade and month, 2017-2021. Red Roe includes striped mullet graded as Red Roe and Roe. White Roe includes striped mullet graded as White Roe. Mixed includes striped mullet graded as Jumbo, Large, Medium, Mixed, Small, and X-Small.





Recreational Fishery

- Implement an individual bag limit of 100 fish per person per day.
- Implement a vessel limit of 400 fish per vessel.
- Provide an exception for For Hire Vessel Operations to possess a bag limit for the number of anglers fishing, up to the 400-fish maximum, including in advance of a trip.



2022 Striped Mullet Stock Assessment:

Amendment 2 Webpage:

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Questions?

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