



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

MICHAEL S. REGAN  
*Secretary*

May 15, 2017

Chairman Sammy Corbett  
Marine Fisheries Commission  
P.O. Box 769  
Morehead City, NC 28557-4769

Chairman Corbett,

Thank you for your March 15, 2017 letter regarding the vote of the Marine Fisheries Commission at the February 15-16, 2017 meeting requesting I take under advisement the removal of stocked fish from the N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

Over the past year, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has both received and taken into consideration very legitimate concerns from the Commission and the public on the status of estuarine striped bass in the central southern management area (CSMA). As you recall, last summer (2016) the Marine Fisheries Commission voted to expedite the next review of the NC Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan to begin in 2017 instead of 2018, and asked staff from DMF and the Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) to begin preparing for this review and amendment of the FMP as soon as possible. We shared the commission's concerns about the stock, and preferred to work through an expedited FMP process rather than enacting any emergency management measures due to the lack of a peer-reviewed stock assessment, a related overfishing/overfished determination, and appropriate biological reference points.

During a recent conversation with WRC Director Gordon Myers, he continued to concur that the expedited FMP process is the most appropriate approach, through which we can devote the proper time to science, public involvement, review of goals and objectives (including unique allocation issues related to their stocking program), and other elements of the FMP process.

I conclude that this approach is the most appropriate to address our collective concerns. I look forward to working with the Marine Fisheries Commission on this FMP update.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael S. Regan'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael S. Regan  
Secretary, NCDEQ

Cc: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission  
Braxton Davis, Director, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries  
Sheila Holman, Assistant Secretary for Environment