



Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr., Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Mark J. Belton, Acting Secretary

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Tidal and Sport Fisheries Advisory Commissioners
FROM: Tom O'Connell, Fisheries Service Director
SUBJECT: Decision to extend commercial striped bass ITQ gill net fishery until Friday, March 13th, 2015.
DATE: February 27, 2015

Commissioners – The Department has decided to extend the commercial striped bass ITQ gill net fishery from March 2nd through March 13th, weekends excluded (ITQ only; the common pool fishery will remain closed). This extension is intended to help address the loss of fishing opportunity and income to the commercial fleet due to the extreme cold temperatures and ice on the Bay for the last couple of weeks. We are confident that this extension poses little to no risk to the conservation and sustainability of the striped bass resource. This confidence is built upon our current striped bass management framework which provides biological reference points, timely reporting, and individual quotas to ensure that the sustainable harvest targets are not exceeded. In the absence of these critical tools, our management uncertainty would increase, making this a much more difficult and risky decision.

The Maryland portion of the Chesapeake Bay is typically closed to striped bass harvest during the month of March and we understand that some stakeholders may question this decision out of concern for the protection of the coastal migrant population preparing to move into our waters to spawn this spring. Staff briefed me on this issue and concluded that interactions with coastal migrants this year, during the first part of March, are highly unlikely due to the cold water temperatures, a key environmental trigger initiating spawning behavior. It is also important to note that the 36 inch maximum size limit still applies to the extension. This ensures the harvest protection of the coastal migrants in the event that there is an interaction.

A public notice announcing this extension is being prepared and it will be posted to our website by close of business today (Friday, February 27th).

Should you have any questions please give me (410) 260-8281, Lynn Fegley (410) 260 – 8285, or Mike Luisi (410) 260-8341 a call. We would be happy to discuss this decision with you. Thanks.

[Map and coordinates of open/closed areas \(COMAR 08.02.15.03\)](#)