

On April 23, 2019, the Marine Resources Commission will consider an emergency staff proposal to eliminate the Bay, Coastal and Potomac River Tributaries Spring Trophy-size Striped Bass Recreational Fisheries described in Chapter 4 VAC 20-252-10 et seq.

The justifications for this proposal include the status of the coastal striped bass stock that is overfished. This means the spawning stock is low and not biologically stable. Overfishing has been occurring for several years meaning the rate of striped bass removals from the stock has caused an overfished condition. The number of striped bass harvested recreationally by Virginia fisheries has declined markedly since 2010 when 368 thousand striped bass were harvested from all tidal Virginia waters. In 2018, preliminary recreational striped bass harvest is less than 52 thousand fish. The reporting rate for the trophy-size recreational striped bass fisheries has been low and ranged from 37 percent to 50 percent, from 2015 through 2018. All these factors have contributed to the staff proposal for these emergency actions, and section § 28.2-210 of the Code of Virginia authorizes these amendments for the protection of the striped bass resource.

The emergency amendments proposed by staff include: 1) elimination of the open season for the Bay spring trophy-size striped bass recreational fishery of May 1 through June 15, inclusive, whereby a 36-inch minimum size limit has been in effect; 2) elimination of the open season for the Coastal spring trophy-size striped bass recreational fishery of May 1 through May 15, inclusive, whereby a 36-inch minimum size limit has been in effect; and, 3) elimination of the open season for the Potomac River tributaries spring striped bass recreational fishery of April 20 through May 15, inclusive, whereby a 35 inch minimum size limit is in effect.

Staff proposes an effective date of April 29, 2019 for the emergency regulation. If the Commission adopts the emergency regulation, a public hearing on this issue would be requested for May 28, 2019.