

## **Summary of Maryland Striped Bass Poaching Incidents**

### **January 3, 2011**

- Maryland's striped bass gill net season opens, with the following restrictions:
  - The daily catch limit will be 300 pounds per striped bass harvest permit with a daily vessel limit of 1200 pounds per vessel
  - Harvest will be permitted only on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
  - The season is expected to close February 28<sup>th</sup>

### **January 17, 2011**

- The striped bass gill net season is closed for the remainder of January after the monthly quota is exceeded by 64,445 pounds. This overage was the result of about one day of fishing before the fishery was closed, and is deducted from the February allocation.

### **February 1, 2011**

- Maryland's striped bass gill net season re-opens, with the following restrictions:
  - The daily catch limit will be 300 pounds per striped bass harvest permit with a daily vessel limit of 1200 pounds per vessel.
  - Harvest will be permitted only on Tuesdays and Wednesdays
  - The total February quota is 350,914 lbs. 230,914 lbs is allocated for the beginning of February, and 120,000 lbs is allocated to the end of February.
  - The early February season will close upon quota achievement, and then the fishery will re-open for the last week in February until quota achievement of February 28<sup>th</sup>, whichever comes first.
- Natural Resources Police (NRP) seized 900 yards of illegal fishing net filled with 529 striped bass weighing 6,121 pounds.
  - Fish averaged 27 inches and about 10 pounds, with some up to 40 inches.
  - Estimated value of the catch was ~ \$15,000.
  - The net had been discovered the previous day, however NRP officials decided to stake out the area in an attempt to catch the poacher responsible.

### **February 2, 2011**

- NRP seize an additional 13,895 pounds of striped bass from three additional illegal anchored gill nets, bringing the total of striped bass seized to 20,016 pounds.
  - Undersized/oversized fish donated to shelters with a small amount used for scientific purposes. Remainder was sold to seafood markets with the proceeds to be used to purchase law enforcement equipment.
  - The Maryland Coastal Conservation Association, Maryland Waterman's Association, Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Maryland Charter Boat Association offered a \$7,000 reward for information that

leading to the arrest and conviction of the person(s) responsible for setting these anchored gill nets.

- In the first two days of the season 148,146 pounds of striped bass are landed, including the poached fish which represented 13.5% of the amount landed.

#### **February 4, 2011**

- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR) closes the commercial gill net season effective February 8, 2011 to make sure the early-February quota is not exceeded if more illegally caught fish are discovered.
- DNR reports that the fishery will remain closed until the extent of illegal nets out on the Bay and the amount of striped bass caught in those nets can be determined.

#### **February 7, 2011**

- NRP patrol boats find two more illegal fishing nets (combined 1,800 yards) and seized 1,159 pounds of striped bass.
- The reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the poachers increased to \$10,000.

#### **February 11, 2011**

- NRP offices discover 3,879 pounds of striped bass in two 900-yard illegal anchored nets.
- The reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the poachers increased to \$20,000.

#### **February 16, 2011**

- Natural Resources Police offices make an 8<sup>th</sup> seizure after locating 1,500 yards of net containing 300 pounds of striped bass in Eastern Bay off Kent Island.
- The reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the poachers increased to \$30,500.

#### **February 22, 2011**

- With an estimated 200,834 pounds of the State's February quota remaining, MD DNR announced it will reopen the striped bass gill net fishery for Friday, February 25<sup>th</sup> and Monday, February 28<sup>th</sup> with all harvest restrictions in effect. This decision was also made based upon a review of harvest accountability protocols and enforcement investigations. Prior to this decision, the Department completed several days of an expanded search for additional illegal gill nets using grappling hooks and side-scan sonar in areas of interest. No additional nets were discovered.
  - DNR implemented an expanded enforcement plan for both days, including additional enforcement presence on the water and at check stations, and also the use of a new radar surveillance system "Maryland Law Enforcement Information Network" that

was recently installed using Homeland Security funding. The system can track vessel movements 24/7.

- DNR reports that if the February quota is exceeded, or if additional illegal gill nets with fish are found, the overage will be deducted from the December gill net quota.

**February 23, 2011**

- Natural Resources Police find a 9<sup>th</sup> illegal anchored gill net. The 400-yard net contained 400 pounds of striped bass. It was believed that the net was set before the shutdown of the commercial rockfish gill net season.
- The total length of confiscated nets is 5.5 miles and the weight of the poached striped bass is 12.6 tons.

**February 25, 2011**

- The striped bass season opens for the day and 30,993 pounds of fish are harvested. Poor weather conditions restrict fishing activity.

**February 28, 2011**

- The striped bass season is opened for the day and 51,520 pounds of fish are harvested.
- The total February harvest (includes confiscated fish) is 235,765 pounds.
- 115,149 pounds of the quota remain, which will be rolled over to the December season or used to cover any additional poaching discovered by NRP.

**Pending Legislation in the Maryland General Assembly**

HB 1154/SB 635 – *Striped Bass and Crabs – Revocation*. The bill allows the Department to revoke a commercial license if that licensee is issued a citation for certain egregious striped bass or blue crab violations. Criminal conviction of the violation is not necessary. The Department may adopt regulations that establish grounds for the revocation after consultation with our Advisory Commissions. The license would be revoked through a hearing with the OAH.

HB 1225/ SB 655 – *Commercial Fishing Enhanced Penalties*. Establishing specified enhanced penalties for a person who commits a specified separate commercial fisheries violation while the person's commercial fishing license or authorization is suspended or revoked or who engages in commercial fishing activities without an appropriate license or authorization; requiring that specified fines imposed under the Act be paid into the Fisheries Research and Development Fund; and clarifying specified commercial fishing violations.

February 2011 Preliminary Striped Bass Landings  
by Gill Net thru 2/28/11

