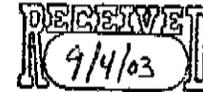


353



**OCEAN CITY CHARTERBOAT
CAPTAIN'S ASSOCIATION**
P.O. Box 940, Ocean City, MD 21842



Anne Lange, Chief,
State-Federal Fisheries Division,
Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NOAA Fisheries,
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317,
Silver Spring, MD 20910,
Faxed to: 301-713-0596

September 4, 2003

Dear Anne,

On behalf of the Ocean City Charterboat Captains Association (OCCCA) I would like to take this opportunity to express our support of opening the EEZ to recreational fishing for striped bass. It's obvious that populations of these fish have made a marked recovery in the past decade and it's certainly time they be made available to recreational fishermen under some type of management plan.

Should such a management plan call for specific periods of a closed season, I would also like to request that recreational fishermen be allowed to continue to fish for striped bass on a catch-and-release basis when the season is closed to retention.

Opening striped bass to recreational fishing in the EEZ would make these fish available to many coastal fishermen who would not otherwise have the opportunity to participate in this fishery. It would also be a wonderful boost to Maryland's coastal "for hire" fleet and local economy.

Sincerely,

Captain Mark Sampson
President - OCCCA

410-213-2442 Home
410-726-7946 Cell
410-213-8221 Fax
mark@bigsharks.com

MANASQUAN FISHING CLUB

PO Box 513

MANASQUAN, NEW JERSEY 08736

MEETINGS HELD THE FIRST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH
AT THE MANASQUAN WOMANS CLUB

Ed Plaskon President

Paul Ward, 2nd Vice President

Herman Pfeifer, Assistant Treasurer

Ed Walsh, Director

Greg Jewell, Vice President

Al Lake, Recording Secretary

Frank Richetti, Director

Thomas Siciliano, Corresponding Secretary

Richard Volz, Treasurer

Howard Stroger, Director

September 5, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief

State-Federal Fisheries Division, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

National Marine Fisheries Service

1315 East West Highway, Room 13317

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Ms. Lange,

As a member of the Manasquan Fishing Club and its 140 members I am writing in opposition to opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing. We have many concerns about the possible opening of the EEZ there is currently no information available that would cause us to change that position. I am providing comments prior to the consideration of any public hearing. The reasons I oppose an opening are as follows:

1. Opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing will increase the overall mortality rate. Amendment 6 allows for the relaxing of the regulations both recreationally and commercially. We are not sure what the consequences will be. No decision on the EEZ should be made until data for 2004 and 2005 has been thoroughly analyzed.

2. New Jersey and New York both have PCB closure areas for the harvesting of striped bass. Our states have been enforcing this ban in state waters. If the EEZ is open and striped bass can be harvested in federal waters, the states will not be providing the enforcement. Given the current pressure on the Coast Guard, we have no faith that the federal government can provide enforcement of any PCB related closure. The health of the consumers must be paramount.

3. Frequently the proponents of opening the EEZ state that this would allow for the use of the by catch of striped bass. They say these fish are being caught anyway and opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing would simply end the waste. With trip limits and other limits in place the by catch does not disappear. Quite the contrary, this encourages high grading and higher mortality. This was clearly demonstrated by what happened when the commercial quota in the winter fishery was increased in North Carolina.

I believe that the opening of the EEZ should not even be considered. If however public hearings were held in New Jersey many members of the Manasquan Fishing Club would like to attend the meeting and be heard.

Sincerely,



MANASQUAN FISHING CLUB

PO Box 513

MANASQUAN, NEW JERSEY 08736

MEETINGS HELD THE FIRST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH
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Howard Stroger, Director

September 5, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division, Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Ms. Lange,

As a member of the Manasquan Fishing Club and its 140 members I am writing in opposition to opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing. We have many concerns about the possible opening of the EEZ there is currently no information available that would cause us to change that position. I am providing comments prior to the consideration of any public hearing. The reasons I oppose an opening are as follows:

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I believe that the opening of the EEZ should not even be considered. If however public hearings were held in New Jersey many members of the Manasquan Fishing Club would like to attend the meeting and be heard.

Catch 'em up and let the little ones go,


HOWARD STROGER

RECEIVED
9/8/03

Sept 1st / 03

309

Dear Ann!

I am against the EEZ
being opened.

In the past I have
left this State to head north to
Fish for Trout + Steelhead. Now
I stay closer to home and make
a few trips up north, because the
Striper fishing from the Beach has
so much improved.

Thank you for your
time.

John A Szoke
987 S. Concourse
Cliffwood N.J.
07735

Ms. Eileen Szoke

987 S. Concourse

Keyport, NJ 07735-5339

**OLD INLET BAIT AND TACKLE**

P.O. Box 129, Highway One
Rehoboth Beach, Delaware 19971
(302) 227-7974 • (302) 227-1490 FAX



354

September 3, 2003

Ms. Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NOAA Fisheries
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Lange:

This letter is in response to your request for public comment regarding the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking addressing potential revisions to the Atlantic Striped Bass regulations for federal waters.

My business has been associated with the recreational fishery for striped bass in Delaware for more than 40 years. The striped bass fishery centered in and near the Indian River Inlet accounts for 35-40% of our annual customer traffic. We are currently experiencing one of the best summer-time runs of striped bass in more than 20 years.

I support the proposal to remove the moratorium on the harvest of Atlantic striped bass in federal waters. I also support the proposed 28-inch minimum size limit.

Re-opening federal waters will provide a positive economic impact to small fishing-related businesses. This is important when considering the negative impact of closures in other fisheries (currently seabass and tautog) that are not as healthy as the striped bass fishery.

The opportunity to comment is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'A. F. Evans'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Amos F. "Butch" Evans
Owner/Operator
Old Inlet Bait and Tackle

September 8, 2003

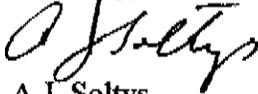
Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Lange

I am a sport fisherman and I strongly oppose opening the EEZ to the taking of striped bass. Striped bass fishing has fallen off sharply in the past few years in the Connecticut waters I fish nearly daily in season. Commercial and sport fishing in the EEZ would increase this downward trend.

Not so many years ago it was difficult to even catch a bass. Overfishing caused the stocks to crash. Let's not make this mistake again. This is a fish that should be declared a Sport Fish and protected.

Sincerely;



A.J. Soltys
21 Middlefield St.
Groton Long Point, CT. 06340

September 8, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Lange

I am a recreational striped bass fisherman from New Jersey, and I highly oppose the opening of the EEZ to the taking of striped bass, commercially. The fishing public has worked long and hard, and made many sacrifices, to bring the striped bass back to the population levels they are at today. Striped Bass stocks are still well below historic levels. I find it hard to believe that the NMFS would even consider opening the EEZ.

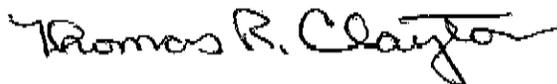
The more than 3,000,000 Recreational Anglers, State Tourism, and many facets of the Fishing Tackle Industry along the East Coast, depend on the continued availability of striped bass. Many businesses were forced to close during the 1970's and 80's, due to the collapse of the striped bass fishery. This was mainly caused by over fishing by commercial interests, is the NMFS going to let history repeat itself?

Furthermore, who is going to police the EEZ?, the Coast Guard?, the United States Navy? I hardly think so, their budgets and manpower wouldn't allow it. What about the states where it is illegal to sell striped bass?

I Hope The NMFS Does The Right Thing, Please, Do Not Open The EEZ To Striped Bass Fishing!!!!!!!!!!!!

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Clayton



Thomas R. Clayton
2809 Hayes St.
Wall, N.J 07719

9/08/03

B20

Sports

Striped Bass Fishery An Issue on EEZ Bid

There are no customs agents. No border patrols. But three miles from the shoreline of every state on the Atlantic Ocean is a barrier that is the fishing equivalent of the Berlin Wall. The area from three to 200 miles offshore is considered federal waters, and more importantly in the last 16 years, it has been a sort of sanctuary for striped bass.

It is called the Exclusive Economic Zone, where fishing for striped bass either commercially or recreationally is prohibited. The EEZ has been credited, along with other measures, for the return in recent years of the striped bass fishery from its near extinction in the 1980s.

Now federal officials are considering opening the EEZ, a move that has drawn applause from many commercial anglers and consternation from conservationists and recreational fishermen. "We don't want to see all of the hard work that has gone into rebuilding the striped bass go down the tube," said Herb Moore, Director of Government Affairs for the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA).

In July, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission voted to open the EEZ, sending its proposal to the National Marine Fisheries Service. A one-month period of public comment followed, but just this week the RFA asked for and received an extension.

The organization argues that public comment is limited because the people the proposal would affect are out on the water this summer. Also, a brief notice of the proposed change was posted in the July 21 edition of the Federal Register, fulfilling legal requirements for public notice but hardly creating the debate the issue deserves. The public comment period for the proposal will now be open until Sept. 25.

"I think it's going to be a pretty

long process," Moore said. "They are well aware of how important stripers are to people, and I suspect they are not going to do anything rash. They know they have a hot issue on their hands."

Opening the EEZ would increase pressure on the fishery and that likely would result in tighter regulations for anglers, such as shorter seasons and longer minimum lengths. To register an opinion on the matter, write to Anne Lange, Chief of State-Federal Fisheries Di-

vision, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13317, Silver Spring, MD, 20910. Or fax a letter to 301-713-0596.

The government tried to open the EEZ in 1996, causing an upwelling of both support and disdain, splitting the fishing community. Eventually the proposal was defeated, but not before the rift between recreational and commercial anglers was further widened.

According to the Coastal Conservation Association, the National Environmental Policy Act mandates an environmental impact study must be completed before any decision is made on the EEZ. Such a study not only will evaluate the possible environmental and economic impacts that opening the EEZ would have on the striped bass fishery, it also will take into account the legal and political ramifications.

"There is a dearth of information regarding the effects of opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing, and NMFS clearly has insufficient data to open the EEZ fishery under current federal law," said Charles Witek, vice chairman of CCA's Government Relations Committee. "We believe the study will show that it is impossible to fashion a rule that will let them."

OUTDOORS



Tom Rock

Bear M's Lange 9/11/03

I have been fishing for over sixty years. I have a small whaler and only fish in the bays of Long Island.

If the area the E E Z to the Commercial waters the stripes and other species of fish will disappear. I only hope that your outfit will not open the E E Z. I remain Al Klages a old veteran.



APPLE

AIR CONDITIONING & HEATING

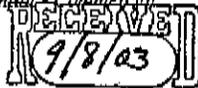
Sincerely Al Klages

Central Air Conditioning • Heating Specialists

Residential • Commercial

3818 Merrick Road
Seaford, New York 11783

516-783-1313
Fax: 516-783-5272



RECEIVED
9/8/03

310

149 East Madison St.
East Islip, N.Y. 11730-1607
September 1, 2003

Chief of State - Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, Md. 20910

Dear Anne Lange,

In lieu of an article I recently read in regards to the opening of the EEZ for stripe bass I felt a letter of disapproval was on my agenda. I am not a bass enthusiast but I feel what has been accomplished over all these years would be wasted by such a re-opening. To open the EEZ to commercialism once again would most definitely be catastrophic in nature. They do enough damage in-shore and without that safe zone for all fish, we would surely decimate the population.

Please reconsider and keep the EEZ closed to the commercial fleet. Why destroy what has taken so many years to rebuild. Also consider the fact that we still have a long way to go to bring our fisheries back from the devastation caused many years ago by foreign commercial fishermen and the lack of the 200 mile bumper zone. Let's leave well enough alone.

Thanking you for your time.

Sincerely,
Thomas Taccone
Thomas Taccone



Conserving Ocean Fish and Their Environment
☆ Celebrating 30 Years in 2003 ☆

August 29, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
NOAA Fisheries
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Lange:

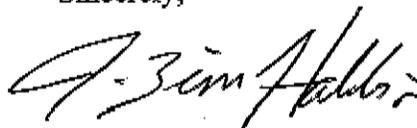
The National Coalition for Marine Conservation (NCMC), founded by conservation-minded anglers 30 years ago, is the nation's oldest public advocacy organization dedicated exclusively to conserving ocean fish and their environment. For much of our history, we have been actively involved in the conservation and management of Atlantic striped bass. In the late 1970s, NCMC sponsored workshops and conferences that served as a catalyst for the first-ever management plan for striped bass. In the mid-1980s we worked to pass the Striped Bass Conservation Act, the federal law that forced coastwide cooperation in the striper's recovery. In recent years, we've focused our efforts to conserve striped bass on ensuring the resurgent population has enough prey to sustain an abundant stock with a balanced age structure.

The NCMC does not support opening the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to the harvest of striped bass. There is no conservation benefit to opening the EEZ. Plenty of opportunities to fish for and catch striped bass, recreationally and commercially, remain available in state waters. Opening the EEZ could disrupt the current management regime, and may require alterations to seasons, bag or trip limits and size limits, in order to achieve current or future management goals.

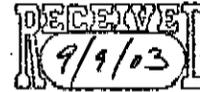
Most importantly, we believe that, given the uncertainties about the health of the striped bass resource, not allowing the fishery to expand offshore at this time is the precautionary thing to do. Despite the resurgence of the striped bass population, serious ecological concerns remain. For example, severe prey shortages may be stunting the growth of the stock in numbers and size of fish and promoting the spread of stress-related diseases, which are increasing in severity and occurrence. Opening up the EEZ would add a new management variable at a time of great uncertainty. Any benefits from opening the EEZ are outweighed by the costs in time and bureaucratic resources to adjust to the change and the potential impacts to the stock.

At some point in the future, reopening the EEZ to striped bass fishing may be appropriate, but now is not the time. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Hobbs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and "H".

Tim Hobbs
Fisheries Project Director



316

***SENT VIA FACSIMILE TO (301) 713-0596 ***

FROM: Michael D. Donovan, PO Box 3973, Windham, NH 03087-3973

TO:

Anne Lange
Chief, State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Ms. Lange:

I respectfully urge NMFS to keep the EEZ closed to striped bass fishing.

First, NMFS must address the commercial bycatch of striped bass that is already occurring in the EEZ before opening these waters to directed fisheries. Extensive coastal migrations of striped bass occur annually in the Mid-Atlantic EEZ and many of these fish are large breeders. During these migrations, large numbers of bass are particularly vulnerable to commercial nets. On the water observations have shown that there is already a significant amount of striped bass mortality in the EEZ due to commercial bycatch. It would not be appropriate to remove the moratorium until this is addressed.

Second, as Amendment 6 states, there are concerns about the relative lack of larger fish in the stock. Lifting the moratorium would place an increased pressure on the stock of older, larger fish, which Amendment 6 seeks to enhance. Thus, the long-term sustainability of the stock would be threatened.

Furthermore, an open harvest of striped bass in the EEZ could cause the fishing mortality rate to exceed the targets set in Amendment 6. Increased effort and landings in the EEZ could then result in more restrictive management measures for recreational fishermen such as higher minimum size limits, reduced bag limits, and shorter seasons which would surely add up to lost opportunities for the recreational fishing sector.

Striped bass are far too valuable to the recreational fishing sector and coastal communities to be compromised by opening the EEZ at this time. I strongly urge NMFS to continue the striped bass harvest moratorium in the EEZ.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Donovan

cc: • Senator Judd Gregg • U.S. Rep. C. Bass • Gov. Benson (NH)
• Senator John Sununu • U.S. Rep. Bradley

September 9, 2003

State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Attn: Anne Lange

Re: US Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

Dear Ms. Lange,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the opening of the US Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to striped bass fishing. Although striped bass have staged a comeback, the EEZ should NOT be opened. My concerns are based on the increased occurrence of stress-related diseases that have occurred in the striped bass population and the relative low numbers of prey that may be causing stunted growth rates.

Recreational striped bass fishing contributes largely to the economic stability of many coastal areas. Therefore, I think it is a resource worth preserving and should be allowed to flourish before the enacted safeguards are relaxed.

Please include my comments in the administrative record.

Sincerely,



Eric Abrams

6 Surrey Drive

Bow, NH 03304

9-9-03

DEAR MS. LANGE,

JUST A NOTE FROM A
CONCERNED CITIZEN. AS A RECREATIONAL
FISHERMAN IN THE NEW YORK AREA
I AM PLEASED TO SEE MANY SPECIES
MAKING COMEBACKS, MOST NOTABLY
THE 'STRIPPED BASS'

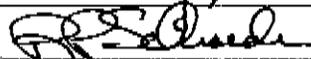
IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO
HINDER THE RECOVERY OF LOCAL SPECIES
WHICH 'LOCAL COMMERCIAL FISHING' WOULD
CERTAINLY DO.

WE SHOULD KEEP THE 'EXCLUSIVE
ECONOMIC ZONE' CLOSED TO
COMMERCIAL FISHING FLEETS BECAUSE
DUE NETS AND TOWLS ONLY
LEAVE DEVASTATION!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.

Sincerely,

ROBERT SCHRÖEDER
256 OGDEN AVENUE
JERSEY CITY, N.J. 07307



Anne Lange, Chief, State-Federal Fisheries Div.
Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NOAA Fisheries
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Sept 9, 2003

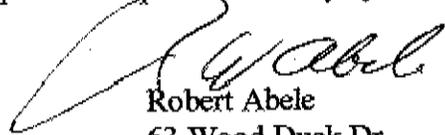
Dear Ms. Lange,

I am strongly against opening up federal waters to commercial and recreational striped bass fishing.

I live in the Ocean City Md. Area where only 3 to 4 years ago did we begin to catch some striped bass in our local waters. Only 2 years ago (2001) did we begin to catch legal fish and in 2002 we had the first good year for catching reasonable numbers of legal fish.

It seems unreasonable to attack the fishery at a time when stocks are just recovering by opening up the Federal waters to commercial and recreational fishing. This area 3 miles off shore is an area of heavy striped bass migration, with many large females necessary to sustain populations. Allowing these fish to be siphoned off will damage the fishery.

Please help protect this important striped bass fishery by not supporting efforts to open up federal waters to their taking.



Robert Abele
63 Wood Duck Dr.
Ocean Pines Md., 21811

September 9, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

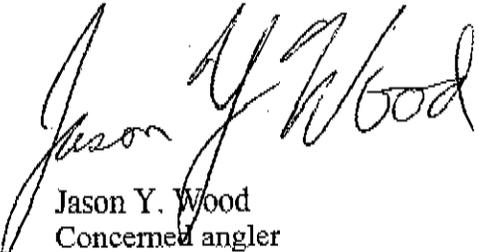
Dear Ms. Lange

As a striped bass fisherman, I oppose the reopening of the EEZ to any kind of striped bass fishing. I feel strongly that near-shore striped bass recreational fishing has declined significantly in quality over the last few years as commercial quotas have increased, in spite of some population estimates from the ASMFC. The effects of the most recent round of commercial increases will not be known for some time into the future. What is known is that more than three million recreational fishermen, as well as a large recreational industry on the East Coast, depend on the continued availability of good striped bass fishing. We do not need more pressure on the resource.

The ASMFC petition to open the EEZ was spearheaded by representatives of a few coastal states to make it easier for their commercial fishermen to catch more striped bass. In fact this measure passed the ASMFC as the result of a six-to-five vote, and I don't need to tell you the breakdown of the voting. Public comment has been largely opposed to reopening the EEZ. The increase in commercial harvest would come at the expense of anglers who are being deprived of a public resource.

The EEZ has been off limits to all fishing for stripers, and serves as a much-needed refuge for striped bass. There is no valid, scientific reason to reopen the EEZ. NMFS is constantly attacked as anti recreational fishing, and for having a poor conservation ethic. Here is a chance for NMFS to do the right thing. Please do not reopen the EEZ to striped bass fishing.

Sincerely;



Jason Y. Wood
Concerned angler
Associate Editor, *Salt Water Sportsman*

311



September 9, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Lange,

As a Recreational Personal Use Striped Bass Fisherman, Life Member of "North American Fishing Club", Member of "Recreational Fishing Alliance", Member of "Wildlife Forever", Member of "Stripers Forever", and Owner of "Fish Head Tackle", I **oppose any movement to open the EEZ to the taking of Striped Bass.**

Despite some highly questionable population estimates from the ASMFC, most informed anglers feel strongly that near-shore striped bass recreational fishing has declined significantly in quality over the last few years as commercial quotas have increased. The effects of the most recent round of commercial increases will not be known for some time into the future. What is known is that more than 3,000,000 recreational anglers, as well as a huge guiding and tackle industry along the East Coast, depend on the continued availability of good Striped Bass fishing. **We do not need more pressure on the resource.**

The ASMFC petition to open the EEZ was spearheaded by representatives of a few coastal states to make it easier for their commercial fishermen to catch more Striped Bass. In fact this measure passed the ASMFC as the result of a 6 to 5 vote, hardly a mandate. Every measure of public comment has consistently been against reopening the EEZ. That increase in commercial harvest comes at the expense of the recreational fishing public who are being deprived of a public resource.

In addition to the conservation implications of reopening the EEZ, there have been reports that a large percentage of Chesapeake Bay Striped Bass carry a dangerous micro bacterial infection. Anglers in the New England states have reported catching diseased fish, so it is inevitable that stripers in the EEZ will also be infected. Further, it will be impossible to police an opening of the EEZ, and Stripers landed in the EEZ will pose problems for gamefish states like ME, NH, CT, DC, NJ, PA, and SC which do not allow the sale of fish caught in their waters.

Attention Please: In New Jersey (Raritan Bay to Southern Jersey Shores), we have had not one but 2 powerful pollution dumps from waste treatment plants. First one from Sayreville New Jersey where a pipe burst and let millions if not billions of untreated waste pour carelessly into Raritan Bay for longer than a week. The second that everyone has heard about, The New York City Blackout when their waste treatment plants lost power and to this day have polluted the Raritan Bay and Jersey

Shores. Our Striped Bass are in enough danger without the harvesting from commercial fishing.

The EEZ has been off limits to all fishing for Stripers, and serves as a refuge for Striped Bass. The fish need this refuge as well as the Raritan Bay and it's rivers. There is no valid, scientific reason to reopen the EEZ. NMFS is constantly attacked as anti recreational fishing, and for having a poor conservation ethic. Here is a chance for NMFS to do the right thing. **PLEASE DO NOT REOPEN THE EEZ TO STRIPED BASS FISHING!!!**

Sincerely;

Gene Karlson
93 Broad St. Apt.#1
Matawan, New Jersey
07747
U.S.A.



September 9, 2003

Office of Sustainable Fisheries
NOAA Fisheries Room 13317
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Springs, MD 20910
Attn: Ms. Annie Lange

Dear Ms. Lange:

I am writing this letter to comment on the proposed revisions to the Atlantic-Striped Bass regulations pertaining to opening the EEZ.

I am ashamed in that this is the first letter I have ever written on behalf of the sport I have devoted most of the spare time of my life to.

It is beyond my comprehension how the people in charge of the regulation of the Atlantic Fisheries have so little regard for the future of our fish stocks. As a recreational fisherman I return most of the fish I catch, keeping only what I use for the table. I have read that since recreational quotas are not reached that commercial quotas are increased. Because the recreational fisherman are conservationist and minimize their catch, the KILLERS OF THE SEAS benefit by having their quotas increased. Am I crazy, but can this make sense to you people?

Now you want to open the stripers to the commercial (fisherman?), the very ones who almost drove the species to extinction. Now I know who is crazy and it's not me.

I, for one, wish to voice my opinion in opposition to this proposal.

If you any information that would support your position, I would be most interested in receiving it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard W. Green". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" and "G".

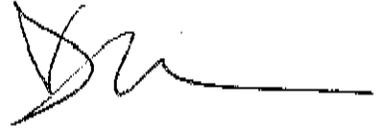
Richard W. Green

9/10/03

325

To: Anne Lange
 Chief State Federal Fisheries
 NMFS
 1315 East-West Highway
 Room 13317
 Silver Spring, MD 20910

From: DINO MESSINA MD
 2 LOCUST LANE
 SHERMAN, CT 06784



RE: Striped Bass / Commercial Fishing

Dear Ms. Lange,

I am a fisherman (conservationist) and we really need to pay attention to lessons of our past history. If we open up the striped bass population to the EEZ we will certainly devastate ~~ANOTHER~~ population of fish and destroy a very popular and economically feasible important sport.

Haven't we done enough to cede swordfish and every other tasty game fish to learn what happens when we let commercial interests dominate our thoughts. We all understand the plight of commercial fishermen but please don't pass this legislation. What we need to do is get rid of the factory trawlers so the small commercial folks can make a living and the general public can enjoy striped/bluefish/swordfish and tuna recreational fishing.

(324)

9/10/03

95 Wolf Avenue
 Malheur, OR 97565
 September 3, 2003

For Anne Lange
 Chief of State - Federal Fisheries Division
 Office of Sustainable Fisheries
 National Marine Fisheries Service
 1315 East-West Highway - Room 13317
 Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Anne,

I have been a recreational fisherman since the age of ten. At age forty-eight I have seen the "up" and "down" cycles of our local fisheries especially Striped Bass. I understand federal officials want to open the Exclusive Economic Zone which I feel will definitely cause another "down" cycle for the Striped Bass fishery after all the effort to rebuild this wonderful fishery!

Please do all you can to keep this EEZ closed and I only wish someday that the Striped Bass will be given a gamefish status and not be able to be sold to supply restaurants this wonderful species.

Thank you,
 MICHAEL SPADAFINA
 Michael Spadafina

1-2-03

Tom Hackett (323)
21 First St
Califan, NJ 07830

Dear Anne Lange,

9/10/03

The comeback of striped bass fishing is phenomenal. This only made possible by the restrictions made to commercial fishing in the EEZ. To reopen the EEZ is not only dangerous, but unnecessary. Nobody has patiently waited 13 yrs. hanging by an economic thread, for striped fishing to be reinstated in these waters. They have moved on. So should you.

Keep the EEZ closed to commercial fishing!

Thanks

Tom Hackett

346

FISHERIES DEFENSE FUND INC.

(A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION)

STEPHEN SLOAN - CHAIRMAN

1040 FIRST AVENUE

SUITE 367

NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022



September 8, 2003

Ms. Anne Lange
Chief of State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
NMFS
1315 East-West Highway
Room 13317
Silver Springs, Maryland 20910
Fax: 301-713-0596

TEL 212-688-7567
FAX 212-751-1384
Email: fishsave@pipeline.com

Re: Opening the EEZ to Striped Bass Fishing
Dear Ms. Lange,

We are absolutely opposed to opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing by any user group for the following reasons:

- 1- There is no enforcement in place to cope with such an opening.
- 2- Recreational fishermen will be disenfranchised from a traditional and historic fishery.
- 3- There is scientific evidence that larger fish, the breeding stock inhabit the deep waters. Any new fishing will negate the inshore recovery that NMFS has trumpeted for the past few years
- 4- Such an opening will only reinforce those who have accused NMFS of going on to the next species in order to placate the commercial fishermen, to the detriment of recreational fishermen and the charter boat industry.
- 5- No ruling has been obtained from the Small Business Agency. With few exceptions almost all the recreational and charter businesses are qualified under the Act. There fore you posting in the Federal Register and the comment period are most certainly illegal under the act.
- 6- There is insufficient data to show any logical conclusion for opening the EEZ to such fishing.
- 7- No one has done an ecological impact study for such a draconian rule.

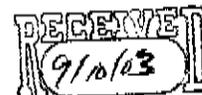
In addition to the above, and part of the Freedom of Information Act [FOIA], we wish to have copies of all answers you receive under the comment period.

Very truly yours

The Fisheries Defense Fund Inc.
Stephen Sloan, Chairman

MANASQUAN FISHING CLUB

PO Box 513

MANASQUAN, NEW JERSEY 08736MEETINGS HELD THE FIRST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH
AT THE MANASQUAN WOMANS CLUB

Ed Plaskon President
 Paul Ward, 2nd Vice President
 Herman Pfeifer, Assistant Treasurer
 Ed Walsh, Director

Greg Jewell, Vice President
 Al Lake, Recording Secretary
 Frank Richetti, Director

Thomas Siciliano, Corresponding Secretary
 Richard Volz, Treasurer
 Howard Stroger, Director

September 5, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
 State-Federal Fisheries Division, Office of Sustainable Fisheries
 National Marine Fisheries Service
 1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
 Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Ms. Lange,

As a member of the Manasquan Fishing Club and its 140 members I am writing in opposition to opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing. We have many concerns about the possible opening of the EEZ there is currently no information available that would cause us to change that position. I am providing comments prior to the consideration of any public hearing. The reasons I oppose an opening are as follows:

1. Opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing will increase the overall mortality rate. Amendment 6 allows for the relaxing of the regulations both recreationally and commercially. We are not sure what the consequences will be. No decision on the EEZ should be made until data for 2004 and 2005 has been thoroughly analyzed.
2. New Jersey and New York both have PCB closure areas for the harvesting of striped bass. Our states have been enforcing this ban in state waters. If the EEZ is open and striped bass can be harvested in federal waters, the states will not be providing the enforcement. Given the current pressure on the Coast Guard, we have no faith that the federal government can provide enforcement of any PCB related closure. The health of the consumers must be paramount.
3. Frequently the proponents of opening the EEZ state that this would allow for the use of the by catch of striped bass. They say these fish are being caught anyway and opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing would simply end the waste. With trip limits and other limits in place the by catch does not disappear. Quite the contrary, this encourages high grading and higher mortality. This was clearly demonstrated by what happened when the commercial quota in the winter fishery was increased in North Carolina.

I believe that the opening of the EEZ should not even be considered. If however public hearings were held in New Jersey many members of the Manasquan Fishing Club would like to attend the meeting and be heard.

Sincerely,

ED PLASKON, PRESIDENT MFC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Plaskon".

76 James Street
South River, N.J. 08882

September 2, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief, State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway,
Room 13317, Silver Spring, Md 20910

RECEIVED
9/16/03

331

Dear Ann Lange:

After a near collapse in the 1980's, the striped bass stock is now at a record level. I am saddened to hear that the National Marine Fisheries Service is considering opening up the Exclusive Economic Zone to commercial and recreational striped bass fishing, which could cause the Striper population to decline once again.

As a 73 year old surf fisherman, I have been recently enjoying some of the best Striper fishing of my lifetime after introducing my son to this sport. The NMFS opening of these waters will undermine management measures already in place and will also result in lost income to thousands of people that depend on monies generated by the recreational fishing community from Virginia to Maine.

I therefore recommend that this measure be cancelled due to the serious impact it would have on the striped bass fishery, not only for now but for future years.

Sincerely,
George Kludas

RECEIVED
9/10/03

Ms. Lange:

9.06.03

I respectfully request you do not
 advocate opening the EET to Commercial
 or Recreational fishing for Striped Bass.
 For the past 20 years, we recreational fishers
 have practiced conservation (hook & release)
 only to see the limit raised, raised, raised,
 raised - but not for 40 years. The only
 reason the fishery is back in the recreational
 fisherman's restraint. Do not let us drop on
 the toilet. Striped Bass should be a GAME
FISH. Respectfully, Capt. Fredman



Matthew Blyth
33 Thornhill Drive
Dartmouth
NS B3B 1R9
Canada
902 456 8919
Sept 11th 2003

Anne Lange Chief State Federal Fisheries Div.
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway RM 13317
Silver Spring MD. 20910

Dear Madam

As a keen angler I was disturbed to hear about the proposed increase in the netting regulations reference to Amendment 6 of the striped bass management plan. As I see it the current issue of a new disease that cannot be identified and is already infecting over half the Chesapeake population will not be sorted out by allowing commercial fishing to increase. I feel it is unnecessary and very foolish to even consider opening the EEZ-Zone to commercial and recreational fishing.

What you have achieved over the years working with sports fishers, environmentalists and commercial fishing interests has been outstanding. Do not undo all the good work that has been achieved over the past years. Now is the time to conserve and see what happens. If you give in to commercial fishing interests, which means an increase in netting, I believe this disease has the potential to devastate the striped bass population.

It must be pointed out that the striped bass is worth hundreds of dollars as a sports fish and only a handful of dollars as dead fish. The commercially caught fish can only be caught once but as a sports fish they are caught several times over. It's a well known fact the fish are too valuable to catch once.

I believe the tourist trade will also be hit hard; many UK anglers, myself included visit, or are planning to visit, the eastern seaboard to go striper fishing.

Your sincerely

Matthew Blyth

Sep 11 03 01:20p

RED SUN CUSTOM

4102131256

p. 1

Anne Lange
Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
1315 East West Hwy
Room 13317
Silver Spring, Md.
20910



Dear Mrs. Lange:

I am in favor of removing the moratorium of the recreational and commercial fishing of Atlantic Striped Bass in Federal Waters. The species has recovered enough to warrant opening the waters with some size and creel limits for both commercial and recreational anglers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "W. Regan", written in a cursive style.

William Regan
10154 Queens Circle
Ocean City, Md.
21842

World Savings
4501 Highwoods Pkwy, Suite 405
Glen Allen, Va. 23060
Fax 804-290-0844
Phone: 804-290-0244



facsimile transmittal

To: Anne Lange Fax: 301-713-0596

From: Ed Hock Date: 9/11/03

Re: Stripers in the EEZ Pages: 1

CC:

- Urgent For Review Please Comment Please Reply Please Recycle

Anne Lange,

I am writing to urge you to keep the EEZ outside the 3-mile limit closed to striper fishing, both commercially and recreationally.

While I enjoy catching striped bass, these fish are already subject to immense pressure during this migration. This boundary gives them some respite from lines and nets and is necessary to keep the population at its current levels.

Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to call with any questions.

Ed Hock
804-869-1933

MANASQUAN FISHING CLUB

PO Box 513

MANASQUAN, NEW JERSEY 08736MEETINGS HELD THE FIRST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH
AT THE MANASQUAN WOMANS CLUB

Ed Plaskon President
 Paul Ward, 2nd Vice President
 Herman Pfiefer, Assistant Treasurer
 Ed Walsh, Director

Greg Jewell, Vice President
 Al Lake, Recording Secretary
 Frank Richetti, Director

Thomas Siciliano, Corresponding Secretary
 Richard Volz, Treasurer
 Howard Stroger, Director

September 5, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
 State-Federal Fisheries Division, Office of Sustainable Fisheries
 National Marine Fisheries Service
 1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
 Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Ms. Lange,

As a member of the Manasquan Fishing Club and its 140 members I am writing in opposition to opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing. We have many concerns about the possible opening of the EEZ and there is currently no information available that would cause us to change that position. I am providing comments prior to the consideration of any public hearing. The reasons I oppose an opening are as follows:

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I believe that the opening of the EEZ should not even be considered. If however public hearings were held in New Jersey many members of the Manasquan Fishing Club would like to attend the meeting and be heard.

Sincerely,


 A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert J. Hillermeier".

Robert J. Hillermeier

MANASQUAN FISHING CLUB

PO Box 513

MANASQUAN, NEW JERSEY 08736MEETINGS HELD THE FIRST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH
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 Howard Stroger, Director

September 5, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
 State-Federal Fisheries Division, Office of Sustainable Fisheries
 National Marine Fisheries Service
 1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
 Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Ms. Lange,

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I believe that the opening of the EEZ should not even be considered. If however public hearings were held in New Jersey many members of the Manasquan Fishing Club would like to attend the meeting and be heard.

Sincerely,

Andrew Johnson
 25 Dogwood Lane
 Freehold, N.J. 07728-1868

RECEIVED
9/11/03

Dear Anne Lange,

9/4/2003

Please keep stripers a
game fish. no Exclusive
Economic Zone, or we will
lose years of hard
work and good conservation
efforts.

Sincerely,
John Richards
Sec. OCEC





Pro Large

Please don't open
up Striped Bass to
EEZ.

Sincerely

Michael Males
36 Beach 281st
Bryn Mawr
PA 19010

302-629-5611

Sent by: Jim Blackwell

302-629-5611

09/12/2003 6:00 PM

Page 1 of 1



7515 Rivershore Drive
Seaford, DE 19973
September 14, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief, State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Lange:

I oppose any and all efforts to open the EEZ to the taking of striped bass.

There is no doubt in my mind that as the commercial take of striped bass increases the recreational take shrinks. I have seen the rockfish population go down to near decimated numbers in my lifetime. I will never understand how those in power will allow it to happen again. Has there ever been an investigation to see if bribes are being accepted by these people?

We must do everything possible to protect America's Saltwater Game Fish.

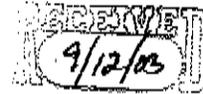
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lewis J. Blackwell". The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

Lewis J. Blackwell

Schrauder, Ron

);
subject: Anne Lange
DO NOT OPEN EEZ



09/12/03

Hi Anne,

I am contacting you to voice my opinion that the EEZ remains closed for striper fishing, as it is today.

I am an avid recreational fisherman that spends way too much money on the hobby. I am please with the way the stock of striped bass has come back and would hate to see any action that might threaten that rebound.

I think most recs are scared and concerned that it will open up a can of worms that will lead to more commercial fishing, more keeping of fish by recs and just confusion in general within the states.

Believe me, I would love to go off of Ocean City, Md and fish for stripers in the fall/winter. But I much rather not do that and keep the stock of stripers safe.

Thanks for your time.

Ron Schrauder
1716 Bayview Rd.
Shady Side, Md., 20764

RECEIVED
9/16/03

September 16, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief, State Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NOAA Fisheries
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

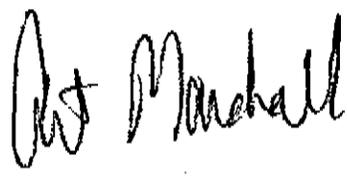
Dear Chief Lange,

I am distressed to hear that there is even a possibility that the EEZ will be reopened to commercial fishing for striped bass. I think it is much too early in the rebuilding of this fishery to allow the reopening of the EEZ. The indiscriminate nature of seine net and gill net harvesting of Stripe Bass will lead to the destruction of a species that is on the road to recovery.

It is time to recognize the Stripe Bass for its worth as a recreational catch, fished for and revered by millions of people. The recreational sector pumps far more \$\$\$ into the economy than the commercial sector (I wish I had the numbers).

I ask that the EEZ continue to be closed to commercial Stripe Bass fishing.

Art Marshall
461 New Boston Rd.
Fall River, MAS 02720



August 30, 2003



10 Huron Ave, Apt. 17B
Jersey City, NJ 07306

Ms. Anne Lange
Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
National Marine Services Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Springs, MD 20910

Re: Striped Bass fishing in the EEZ

Ms Lange:

I am writing to express my opinion that **the Exclusive Economic Zone should remain closed to striped bass fishing.**

As a recreational fisherman who has witnessed the decline and re-emergence of the striped bass fishery I appreciate how fragile the fishery is and how easily commercial overfishing takes hold.

It would be a sad mistake to open the EEZ for commercial striped bass fishing.

Sincerely,

Bruce Herskovics

RECEIVED
9/17/03

September 16, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief, State Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NOAA Fisheries
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Chief Lange,

I am distressed to hear that there is even a possibility that the EEZ will be reopened to commercial fishing for striped bass. Having participated in moratoriums designed to replenish the numbers of striped bass on the Atlantic coast, I feel that it is much too early in the rebuilding of this fishery to allow the reopening of the EEZ.

I attended last year's ASMFC hearings held in Warwick, Rhode Island and was appalled at the conduct of that board. While the advisory committee attempted to honor the public's comments and opinions, the board completely disregarded public comment and opinion. That board went so far as to completely disregard the wording and intent of proposals that had been circulated for months in advance to gain public input. That board was obviously hell bent on increasing commercial quotas no matter what recommendations came forward from the advisory committee. Compare the written agenda and the "public survey" to the actual transcripts for those hearings and you will see this for yourself.

Maybe the EEZ can be reopened to the fishing of striped bass at some point in the future. This decision should not be based on any recommendations of the ASMFC for the above reasons. I think we should error on the side of caution and keep the EEZ closed to all commercial fishing until there is no possibility that present commercial quotas will start the striped bass fishery into a downward spiral once again. Recreational anglers will readily participate in the continued closure of the EEZ as well.

Robert Moeller
Board of Directors,
Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association



**RHODE ISLAND
SALTWATER
ANGLERS**
Association

Robert Moeller
Board of Directors

(401) 539-3047

e-mail: moeller@risaa.org

145 Skunk Hill Road, Exeter, RI 02822

FROM : Sughrue Mion

FAX NO. : 202 293 7860

Sep. 17 2003 01:46PM P1



1713 Riggs Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

September 17, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
(301) 713-0596 (FAX)

Re: Proposed Revisions to Atlantic Striped Bass Regulations in Federal Waters

Dear Ms. Lange:

I understand from the Washington Post, the June/July issue of Saltwater Flyfishing, Brad Burns' organization Stripers Forever, and various other sources that the Federal government is considering reopening Federal waters -- the so-called EEZ -- to the commercial harvest of striped bass, or rockfish.

As a citizen, taxpayer, and life-long recreational fisherman, I am writing to let you know that I am opposed to reopening Federal waters to the harvest of striped bass by either commercial or recreational fisherman, and I urge the National Marine Fisheries Service not to do so.

I am forty one years old. I grew up in New Jersey not far from the shore, and now live in Washington D.C. and fish on the Chesapeake Bay, both on my own boat and on charters. I keep a fish occasionally, but for the most part practice catch and release fishing.

For much of my lifetime, we have had no viable fishery for striped bass because they were overfished. Now we do, but from personal experience and the observations of other anglers -- including many who have been around much longer than I have -- what we have today is a lot of small fish. The larger, older fish are being culled from the population already. My understanding is that stripers can live to be 30 years old, but it is rare today to catch one that is over 15 years of age. The situation is the same with bluefin tuna -- they are fished so hard that the older (and larger) fish simply are not there any more.

At present, the stripers at least have a safe haven in the EEZ. I am concerned that if the EEZ is reopened to the harvest of striped bass, it will exacerbate the situation we already have -- an unbalanced population with a lot of small fish -- and ultimately lead to another crash of the population. The fish are already under increasing pressure with the recent increase in the commercial harvest quota and other changes such as Maryland's

FROM :Sughrue M10N

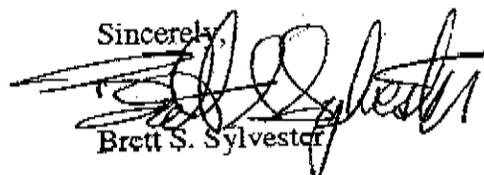
FAX NO. :202 293 7860

Sep. 17 2003 01:47PM P2

lengthening of the recreational season, a change which I for one did not understand or support. Please leave the moratorium in place, and let's strive for a sustainable population of striped bass that includes good numbers of fish of all ages.

If you have any questions regarding my comments, please call me at (202) 663-7360 or send me an e-mail at bsylvester@sughrue.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brett S. Sylvester", written over a horizontal line.

Brett S. Sylvester

Jenewick Island, DE
Sept 12, 2003

9/17/03

Dear Ms. Lange,

I am submitting my comment regarding re opening the area beyond the 3 mile limit for striped bass fishing.

My viewpoint is that this species should be protected as in the past so as not to allow commercial activity but to maintain the present rules which means so much to the sport fishery. If you could see the wonder and excitement generated when a small boy or girl catches one of this fish, you would agree that as our population increases we should leave this species protected for the sport fishery.

As soon as you allow commercialization of this fishery you will, as usual, face the problem of supervising and regulating the commercial fisheries.

I ask you to proceed with great caution on this matter so that we do not face the bleak future again of a time when the striped bass fishery plummeted. The present sustainable state of this species should not be endangered by the usually poorly managed aspect of the commercial approach.

Sincerely yours,

Michael P. Chiaramonte



September 12, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Lange:

As a recreational striped bass fisherman, *I am opposed to the proposed opening of the Extended Economic Zone (EEZ)* for the purpose of harvesting striped bass.

Regardless of all the rhetoric your office receives, please ask yourself one question: Why change a fisheries' policy that has reinstated the striped bass as the premier game fish on the Atlantic coast? The economic benefits of the fishing industry far outweigh the few commercial fishing organizations that will benefit from this proposed policy change.

As a young person who fished with family members, I never saw a striper!! Now, because of conservation measures and fairly sound harvesting rules (I still don't understand why many states allow line harvesting of large stripers while typically fishing at night?), the striped bass is *the* fish to catch. And if your institution's vision remains unclouded, stripers will be *the* fish to catch for future generations!

I am unsure of the legislative process, but your office should strongly consider instituting the striped bass as a game fish. If I understand the ramifications correctly, the game fish status will protect this wonderful resource for what is hopefully forever. The striped bass was an important resource for hundreds of years until our greed almost eliminated the fishery (we have affected too many fish and game species with overzealous harvesting...will we ever learn from these errors?). Please do not allow this same process to happen to the striper!

Thanks for allowing the public some additional time to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Tom". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Tom Wilhelm
407 Aurora Drive
Egg Harbor Township, NJ 08234
609-335-3222



September 9, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief, State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Lange

As a recreational angler and concerned citizen of the Chesapeake Bay community, I strongly oppose opening the EEZ to commercial striped bass fishing. With little question, the striped bass represents the emblematic game fish of our Bay. In my local community, this recreational fishery contributes significantly to our local economy and historical heritage. After such recent striped bass population concerns, it is preposterous to consider reopening this protective area at the request of the commercial fishing industry. The EEZ serves as a much-needed refuge for a healthy breeding stock of large striped bass in and around the Chesapeake Bay. Opening this area to commercial fishing will negatively impact this critical population of fish for decades. The petition of commercial anglers to open the EEZ is simply based on shortsighted financial gain and neglects consideration for a healthy long-term fishery. There is no valid scientific reason to reopen the EEZ. It would be impossible to police the EEZ and the commercial industry has provided numerous examples that it is unable to police itself. This letter is not directed at the over harvest and blatantly illegal practices of commercial fishing that I have witnessed, but their existence must be mentioned to draw attention to this group's selfish priorities and lack of self regulation. A trial opening the EEZ with a plan to reevaluate the biologic impact in the near term is, likewise, a recipe for disaster. I strongly discourage opening of the EEZ to commercial (and recreational) fishing and encourage the NMFS to move towards further protection of our menhaden and striped bass populations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan C. Heffner".

Alan C. Heffner, M.D.
360 Pender Ct.
Norfolk, VA 23517

MANASQUAN FISHING CLUB

PO Box 513

MANASQUAN, NEW JERSEY 08736MEETINGS HELD THE FIRST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH
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Richard Volz, Treasurer
Howard Struger, Director

September 5, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division, Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Ms. Lange,

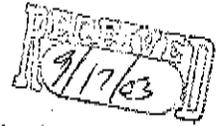
As a member of the Manasquan Fishing Club and its 140 members I am writing in opposition to opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing. We have many concerns about the possible opening of the EEZ there is currently no information available that would cause us to change that position. I am providing comments prior to the consideration of any public hearing. The reasons I oppose an opening are as follows:

1. Opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing will increase the overall mortality rate. Amendment 6 allows for the relaxing of the regulations both recreationally and commercially. We are not sure what the consequences will be. No decision on the EEZ should be made until data for 2004 and 2005 has been thoroughly analyzed.
2. New Jersey and New York both have PCB closure areas for the harvesting of striped bass. Our states have been enforcing this ban in state waters. If the EEZ is open and striped bass can be harvested in federal waters, the states will not be providing the enforcement. Given the current pressure on the Coast Guard, we have no faith that the federal government can provide enforcement of any PCB related closure. The health of the consumers must be paramount.
3. Frequently the proponents of opening the EEZ state that this would allow for the use of the by catch of striped bass. They say these fish are being caught anyway and opening the EEZ to striped bass fishing would simply end the waste. With trip limits and other limits in place the by catch does not disappear. Quite the contrary, this encourages high grading and higher mortality. This was clearly demonstrated by what happened when the commercial quota in the winter fishery was increased in North Carolina.

I believe that the opening of the EEZ should not even be considered. If however public hearings were held in New Jersey many members of the Manasquan Fishing Club would like to attend the meeting and be heard.

Sincerely,

Ms. Janze,



The Striped Bass is one of a few bright spots in the fishery picture. Please don't let the netters take our sunshine away!

Lee Bunting



William D. Hubbard
Post Office Box 1054
Rye, New Hampshire 03870-1054
Onshore@worldpath.net
603-431-8735

September 9, 2003

**National Marine Fisheries Service
Att: Ann Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Springs, MD 20910**

Re: ASMFC Request to Open EEZ

Dear Ms. Lange:

I am in favor of NMFS re-opening the EEZ for Striped Bass Fishing.

I have fished for Striped Bass since the late 1940's. Before the moratorium on fishing for the species, it was a common practice for fishermen to take stripers in the EEZ. That occurred most notably on Stellwagen Bank and the Nantucket Shoals areas in Massachusetts, but also offshore in other states.

When the EEZ was closed it was not done for any scientific reason. It was done as part of a coastwise moratorium on taking the species. Now, the species is restored to numbers that none of us have ever experienced in past years.

As in the past, there has been no scientific reason advanced for keeping the EEZ closed to angling for Striped Bass. Therefore, I would hope that NMFS would accede to the wishes of the ASMFC and re-open the EEZ for Striped Bass fishing. Reopen that historic and traditional area off our coastline for fishing.


William D. Hubbard

North Fork Captains Association
29745 Main Road
Cutchogue, NY 11935



President: Capt. Jim House
Vice-President: Capt. Robert Rocchetta
Treasurer: Capt Edward Czelatka
Secretary: Capt Michael Lotito

September 14, 2003

Ms. Anne Lange
Chief, State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Fax (301) 713-0596

Dear Ms. Lange:

The North Fork Captains Association represents charter boat captains of the North Fork of Long Island. Our experienced captains have supported and participated in the programs leading to the successful return of striped bass to Long Island's waters. We strongly feel that NMFS should support the existing conditions, the continued closure of the Mid-Atlantic EEZ with the exception of the waters between Montauk Point and Block Island which are traditionally fished by recreational fishers. We are extremely concerned that NMFS's proposed opening the Mid-Atlantic EEZ to striped bass fishing would quickly destroy the hard-won progress that has been made towards a sustainable fishery.

Already, there is an alarming lack of larger fish in the stock. If NMFS lifts the current moratorium on the EEZ, there would be increased pressure on the stock of older, larger fish. Therefore, the lifting of the moratorium is a direct conflict to the intentions of Amendment 6.

Furthermore, an open harvest of striped bass in the EEZ has a strong possibility of increasing the fishing mortality rate to exceed the targets set in Amendment 6. The end result would then require more restrictive management measures for recreational fishermen (higher minimum size limits, reduced bag limits, and shorter seasons), punishing the recreational fishing sector.

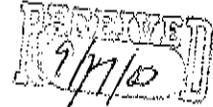
The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires NMFS to consider the economic and cultural impact on local communities when changing regulations. We strongly urge NMFS to support the traditional recreational fishing and the hook-and-line commercial harvesting in the waters between Montauk Point and Block Island, as this industry is crucial to the economy of our coastal communities. Recreational fishing supports a thriving motel, restaurant, bait shop, and tourist industry on the North Fork.

We also urge NMFS to address the commercial bycatch of striped bass that is already occurring in the EEZ. Coastal migrations occur annually in the Mid-Atlantic EEZ, with many large breeders, and these fish are particularly vulnerable to commercial nets. On the water observations have shown that there is already a significant amount of striped bass mortality in the EEZ due to commercial bycatch. It would not be appropriate to remove the moratorium until this critical issue addressed.

We strongly urge NMFS to continue the striped bass harvest moratorium in the EEZ with an easement for the area between Montauk Point and Block Island.

Sincerely,

Captain James A. House, D.V.M., Ph.D.
President



September 9, 2003

Anne Lange, Chief
State-Federal Fisheries Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway, Room 13317
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Lange

I am not a sports fisherman, but I oppose any movement to open the EEZ to the taking of striped bass by commercial fishermen. I have friends, and a nephew, who are avid fishermen and who have commented about their impression that near-shore striped bass recreational fishing has declined significantly in quality over the last few years as commercial quotas have increased. It seems irresponsible to me that more pressure would be added now. Restricting fishing for stripers in the EEZ would seem to me to be a sensible move to keep this fish species alive. At some point, we simply have to face the need to regulate commercial pressures before they follow their understandably natural instincts and run a biologic population down to extinction. Ultimately, protecting the species and modulating the access of commercial fisherman is the only way that commercial (and sport) fishing will stay alive. Better to make a mistake now and block further development than to open it up and destroy the resource.

Sincerely yours,


Gordon Moore
9 Rutland Street
Cambridge, MA 02138