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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515 - 3006

October 29, 2019

Mr. James J. Gilmore, Chair
Mr. Mike Armstrong, Striped Bass Management Board Chair
Mr. Bob Beal, Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 N. Highlands Street, Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Gilmore, Mr. Armstrong, and Mr. Beal:

I write regarding Addendum VI, which the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will consider Wednesday, October 30. I fully support efforts to conserve the Striped Bass stock and Addendum VI's goal to reduce removals by 18 percent from 2017 levels, including dead releases. In addition, setting slot size limits and circle hook requirements is a sensible path forward, particularly to curtail catch and release mortality rates. However, I am very concerned about the means ASMFC may pursue to achieve this goal and the negative and unnecessary consequences for New Jersey fishermen.

As I understand it, the Technical Committee proposes that many states will be required to go beyond the accepted shared conservation goal. This is due in part to the effort to lock states into a management regime that use slot sizes that are generic to the full coast instead of tailored to the science on local stock. In New Jersey's case, our recreational fishermen would have to reduce removals by an approximate 40 percent from 2017 levels. In addition, I have been informed that ASMFC may pursue a motion to disallow states from issuing their own management measures that achieve the same conservation goal through the addendum instead of amendment process.

While I share the goal to protect the iconic Striped Bass stock, such steps are unnecessary and would have drastic consequences for New Jersey's and other states' recreational fishing sectors and coastal communities. Consistent with past practice, the State of New Jersey should be allowed the opportunity to propose a conservation equivalent to meet the 18 percent reduction goal using slot sizes that are tailored to states' Striped Bass stock.

I sincerely hope you will strongly encourage the Striped Bass Management Board and Technical Committee to pursue a fair management regime that achieves our shared conservation goal.

Sincerely,



FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress