

February 3, 2020

Press Release from MV Striped Bass and Bluefish Derby Committee

At its January 30, 2020 meeting, the Martha's Vineyard Striped Bass and Bluefish Derby Committee unanimously voted in favor of removing striped bass as an eligible species in the 2020 Derby.

The Derby Committee recognizes the need to reduce pressure on striped bass, as efforts to support recovery of the species increase. Recreational fishing communities and fisheries scientists understand the unequalled value of striped bass. The Derby shares this view, and acknowledges the importance of supporting measures to restore healthy striped bass stocks. Throughout its history, the Derby Committee has demonstrated this commitment. From 1985-1992, striped bass were not an eligible species in the Derby due to concerns about the health of the population. Since then, we have partnered closely with fisheries managers to monitor the species. The Derby has included minimum size requirements for striped bass that were above the state regulations. We have been and continue to be mindful about the increasing concerns about striped bass.

Because of the obvious significance of striped bass – to the recreational fishing community and to the Derby – we strongly believe that the responsible decision is to completely remove it as an eligible species in the 2020 Derby, including any catch and release component. The Derby Committee will continue to partner with fisheries scientists and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries in an effort to thoughtfully and responsibly consider the role of striped bass in the Derby, ongoing. As part of this, we encourage anglers and Derby participants to continue to think about striped bass, even if not fishing for them. Widely recognized as the most important fish swimming in our waters, striped bass need and deserve our continued attention, as we work together on the recovery of the species.

In 1993, then-Derby President Ed Jerome wrote, “The Derby Committee is proud to have played an influential role in the recovery of the striped bass. When we excluded the striper from our tournament in 1985, it may have been only symbolic, but it sent a message to sportfishing contests and enthusiasts that without a good management plan, this treasured resource would be no more. It was not easy for us at the time, but today’s recovery of the striped bass has made it all worthwhile.”

The Derby Committee appreciates the support from participants, sponsors, and all who value striped bass. While it is disappointing to not include striped bass in the 2020 Derby, we recognize it as a necessary decision, just as the Committee did in 1985. We hope it again will be part of a larger effort that is successful in realizing the recovery of striped bass.

Any questions should be addressed to Derby President John Custer or Derby Vice President and Chairman Joe El-Deiry at mvderbycommittee@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

The Martha's Vineyard Striped Bass and Bluefish Derby Committee