

PATCHOGUE FISHING CLUB

NOVEMBER CONSERVATION REPORT

WEAKFISH

We may have dodged the bullet in regards to next year's weakfish regulations. In a MASMFC meeting last week, there was a vote taken to keep either the current regulations or severely restricting the quota for weakfish. There not enough votes cast either way for a decision so the current regulations stay in effect pending a comprehensive review of a multi-state weakfish stock assessment. According to the decision, it was decided that the current dip in the weakfish population is largely being caused by a natural occurrence not by recreational over fishing. It seems the feeling is that since there has been a depletion of the natural forage, the larger game fish are now turning to young weakfish and blue fish as a substitute for food. Why is the natural forage declining, well the MASMFC has raised the quota for bunker by 25% to the reduction industry. Add to this the drastic rise in the spiny dogfish population in our local waters and you now have very fierce competition for food supply.

This situation refers back to the moratorium against fishing spin dogfish I reported earlier this year. Their numbers are increasing at alarming rate because of the ban and in turn, they are consuming of the local food supply at an alarming rate.

2006 Fluke Season Looks Bleak

NOAA Marine Fisheries is calling for some drastic cuts in the quotas for the 2006 summer flounder season. We were scheduled to have a quota of 33,000,000 pounds, but this number would not allow the 2010 target number to be achieved. The MASMFC is calling for a reduction of the quota to 26,000,000 pounds but NOAA has said that it would defiantly veto that number. NOAA wants to reduce the number to 23.5 million pounds, and still feels that further cuts are needed to meet the 2010-biomass numbers set for summer flounder. If NOAA gets their way we would be looking severe cuts in the recreational fishing regulations for 2006 and most likely another reduction for 2007. Several group include the RFA are doing battle with NOAA and trying save next years fluke season.

No Fishing Zones

Several environmental and conservation groups are trying to get the local state government to designate certain marine areas as wildlife preserves thus making them no fishing zones. The groups claim that New York state marine fish stocks are in a state of disaster. The claim is that many species are in danger of being listed as endangered and most are in the over fished category.

These are the same groups, which have been trying this same tactic through out the country. They have had some limited successes in the states of Florida and California, but for the most part, they have been turned back. The RFA is once again in the fray with this one. Let us hope New York State DEC sees this for what it is. It is an attempt by theses conservation groups, trying to put a stop to all fishing and hunting in our area. Recently these groups attempted this by covering with the White Marlin issue. They pushed NOAA to declare the Atlantic White Marlin as endangered. This would make it illegal to fish for them period, even in a catch and release situation. This also would close any areas to fishing, which are known to hold a white marlin population. No Fish Zones!

Let us hope that RFA can put a stop to this nonsense and save our sport.