

Slot Limits on the Hudson River for Striped Bass

by Capt. Jimmy Samia

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In 2017, we will be experiencing our third season of the implementation of slot limits for breeding class striped bass that come every year to the Hudson River to spawn. For those who are new to this, the slot limit is set from 28"- 40" and works as such that any stripers that are within this slot must be released unharmed back into the river. So, how has it been working?

As a charter boat owner/operator for over 18 yrs. I must admit that I was a bit skeptical on how this slot limit for stripers would actually work out. On face value, it seemed to me that we would be releasing over 90 % of all the fish that my clients hooked up. My concern was how would my clients re-act to what would become a virtual catch and release fishery.

During the 2015 season, we got to experience the slot limit for the first time and the reaction of my clients to it. There were those fishermen that didn't seem very happy with releasing stripers that were in the slot. In the Coeymans' Landing area where we are headquartered, the majority of our fish fall within the upper limit of the slot, typically measuring in the 36-38" range. With the previous law



being only a one fish limit per person per day 18" or better, having to let these huge fish go seemed painful to some!

To appease those clients who wanted to keep fish, we changed our tactics and attempted to target smaller juvenile fish who were over 18" but less than 28". To some degree we were able to do this, especially earlier in the season when the water was cold. Once the water warmed up, this became increasingly harder to do. One adjustment we made to combat the effects of the slot limit was to inform potential new clients as well as the old that there would most likely be a lot of catch and release going on. Most clients seemed to be O.K with this when told up front about it.

In 2015, our clients boated two fish over 40". What do you think happened in 2016? First off, to my surprise, most people were O.K with practicing catch and release. In fact, our charter calendar on the Hudson was full and the fishing turned out to be fantastic! Our Ace Charters' clients boated eight fish over 40" with our biggest measuring 43" and tipping the scales at over 33lbs. We experienced many double digit days and had a blast battling upper slot limit fish. We had many fish that were in the 39" plus range and just short of that magic 40" mark. Our best group boated 21 fish and they were all in the slot.

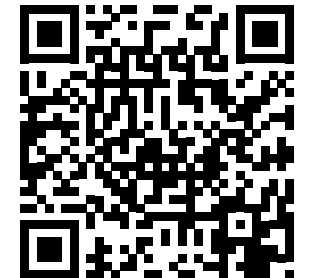
I must admit that my earlier skepticism in regards to fishing quality and the client reaction to increased catch and release fishing has changed. The 2016 striper season on the Hudson

was a banner year in terms of quality and quantity of stripers. Many other fishermen that we converse with on a near daily basis were also experiencing great fishing for stripers as well. It was quite common to hear that fish just under 40" were being released back into the river almost daily. It reminded me back of the good old days when we first started fishing the Hudson in the mid-eighties. I'm hoping this year is at least as good as last year and perhaps maybe even better. There were a lot of fish last year returned to the river unharmed that were just less than 40". Imagine what affect another year of growth will have if these fish were able to survive!

Capt. Jimmy Samia owns and operates www.acecharters.com and operates his charter out of Coeymans Landing New York. He can be reached at 413-346-7675 or e-mailed at acecharters36@gmail.com

"The proper way to land a big Striped Bass."

Check this out on YouTube:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Z8lcMtKuU>