HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3394 FILED ON: 1/18/2013

HOUSE . . . . . No. 659

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Matthew A. Beaton

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying:

An Act protecting the legal harvest of striped bass.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Matthew A. Beaton	*11th Worcester*
Kimberly N. Ferguson	*1st Worcester*

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By Mr. Beaton of Shrewsbury, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 659) of Matthew A. Beaton and Kimberly N. Ferguson for legislation to to implement a striped bass commercial tagging program at the point of harvest. Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

An Act protecting the legal harvest of striped bass.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Whereas the illegal harvesting of striped bass has the potential to undermine the sustainability of striped bass populations on the Atlantic Coast; and

Whereas the illegal harvest of striped bass has the potential to reduce the economic opportunities of commercial fisherman who are legally participating in the fishery; and

Whereas at the February 2012 Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission (ASMFC) Striped Bass Management Board meeting a motion was passed to initiate the development of an addendum to incorporate the recommendations made by the Interstate Watershed Task Force (IWTF) and the ASMFC Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) on reducing the illegal harvest of striped bass; and

Whereas the IWTF and LEC recommended that all Atlantic States and jurisdictions implement a uniform commercial tagging system where striped bass are harvested and landed for sale; and

Whereas the IWTF and LEC recommended that all fish harvested for sale be tagged immediately upon possession at the point of harvest; and

Whereas the IWTF and LEC recommended that the States and jurisdictions issue a set of number tags based on a sound scientific sample of the average (mean) weight of legal-sized fish harvested in open season for that type of gear divided into the weight quota; and

Whereas the IWTF and LEC recommended requiring all unused tags to be returned on annual or seasonal basis and prohibit license renewal if unused tags are not returned; and

Whereas the IWTF and LEC recommended the implementation of license revocation or suspension as a primary penalty for state or federal violations;; and

Whereas the IWTF and LEC recommended that states and jurisdictions' law enforcement officers have real-time access to tag numbers issued to each fisherman; and

Whereas at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission 2012 Summer Meeting a motion was made to approve the IWTF and LEC recommendations for a uniform commercial tagging program at the point of harvest; and

Whereas a motion was made by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to substitute for this option to tag at the point of harvest; and

Whereas this motion was practically for no action to be taken now and for the states to act at their own discretion at a later date; and

Whereas that motion passed by an 8 in favor, 7 opposed and 1 abstention and thus a motion for no action was accepted;

Therefore be it resolved that the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Commission working with the Massachusetts Director of Marine Fisheries adopt the recommendations made by the Interstate Watershed Task Force and the Atlantic State Marine Fisheries Commission Law Enforcement Committee to implement a striped bass commercial tagging program at the point of harvest.