



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education

## House Bill 1232

Fisheries – Striped Bass or Rockfish – Juvenile Survey

Date: March 6, 2024

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Position:

From:

**Favorable with Amendments**

Allison Colden

MD Executive Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS HB 1232 WITH AMENDMENTS**. HB 1232 would require the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to include additional sampling locations in its annual juvenile striped bass survey within the central portion of Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. CBF requests amendments that would instead require DNR to evaluate and report on any recommended changes to the striped bass juvenile survey following consultation with academic and regional management partners.

Maryland's [striped bass juvenile survey](#) annually samples 22 fixed locations using a seine net. Each location is sampled multiple times, resulting in 132 samples collected each year. The data from this survey is used to determine the state's "juvenile index" which tracks the relative abundance and trends in juvenile striped bass. This survey, which has run continuously since 1954, is a critical source of data for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's striped bass stock assessment and the longest running dataset included in the assessment (*see table below*).

Chesapeake Bay is the most important spawning ground for striped bass along the East Coast. More than 75% of all striped bass coastwide are spawned in Chesapeake Bay; therefore, the ability to monitor the spawning success and survival of young striped bass accurately and effectively in Maryland is critical for managers working to sustainably manage this iconic species.

HB 1232 proposes adding several new sample sites to existing survey locations. While shifts in sampling locations and the inclusion of auxiliary sample locations have occurred in the past, changes to this long-running dataset should not be made lightly. To maintain the integrity of the long-term dataset, robust comparison tests and calibration are required when making changes to survey protocols. For example, DNR was recently forced to shift to a new material for gill nets used in the striped bass gill net survey due to lack of availability. To calibrate the survey, 144 additional paired gill net samples were required, a significant investment of time and resources.

That said, we acknowledge that periodic evaluation of the efficacy and accuracy of these surveys, particularly in light of climate-induced changes in environmental conditions, is a wise and warranted exercise. Therefore, **we request the Committee instead direct DNR to comprehensively review its current survey methods and recommend any needed changes to timing, geography, or sampling protocols prior to the start of the 2025 legislative session**. This would afford DNR the opportunity to confer with academic

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partners on the latest striped bass science and vet any proposed survey changes with technical staff and partners at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to ensure there would be no detrimental effects of changing the current survey design.

**CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report WITH AMENDMENTS on HB 1232.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at [mstegman@cbf.org](mailto:mstegman@cbf.org).

Index Name	Index Metric	Design	Time of		
			Year	Years	Age
MRIP Total Catch Rate Index	Total catch per unit effort	Stratified random	Mar-Dec	1982-2021	1+
Connecticut Long Island Sound Trawl Survey (CTLISTS)	Mean number per tow	Stratified random	Apr-Jun	1984-2021	1+
New York Ocean Haul Seine (NYOHS)	Geometric mean per haul	Fixed station	Sep-Oct	1987-2006	1+
New York Young-of-the-Year (NYYOY)	Geometric mean per haul	Fixed station	Jul-Nov	1985-2021	YOY
New York Western Long Island Beach Seine Survey (NY Age-1)	Geometric mean per haul	Fixed station	May-Aug	1984-2021	1
New Jersey Bottom Trawl Survey (NJTRL)	Stratified mean per tow	Stratified random	April	1990-2018	1+
New Jersey Young-of-the-Year Survey (NJYOY)	Geometric mean per haul	Fixed station	Aug-Oct	1982-2021	YOY
Delaware Spawning Stock Electrofishing Survey (DESSN)	Geometric mean per tow	Fixed station	Apr-Jun	1996-2021	1+
Delaware 30’ Bottom Trawl Survey (DE30)	Geometric mean per tow	Fixed station	Nov-Dec	1990-2021	1+
Maryland Spawning Stock Survey (MDSSN)	Selectivity-corrected CPUE	Stratified random	Mar-May	1985-2021	1+
Maryland Young-of-the-Year and Yearlings Surveys (MDYOY and MD Age-1)	Geometric mean per haul	Fixed station	Jul-Sep	1954-2021	0-1
Virginia Young-of-the-Year Survey (VAYOY)	Geometric mean per haul	Fixed station	Jul-Sep	1980-2021	YOY
Chesapeake Bay Multispecies Monitoring and Assessment Program (ChesMMAP)	Stratified mean per tow	Stratified random	Mar-Nov	2002-2018	1+

Summary of surveys used in the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s coastwide Atlantic striped bass stock assessment. Note Maryland’s Young-of-the-Year survey is the longest running survey included in the assessment. Source: [2022 Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update Report Including May 2023 Supplemental Report](#).