

JACK BAILEY
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Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Judicial Proceedings Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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March 10, 2021

Senate Joint Resolution 6 – Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission – Atlantic Menhaden – Population Evaluation and Prohibition on Commercial Reduction Fishing

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Joint Resolution 6 – Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission – Atlantic Menhaden – Population Evaluation and Prohibition on Commercial Reduction Fishing. This joint resolution requests that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission evaluate the population of Atlantic menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay. This resolution also recommends that, in order to maintain a sustainable Atlantic menhaden fishery, the ASMFC consider prohibiting the commercial reduction fishing of Atlantic menhaden, including the use of purse seines and spotter planes, in the Chesapeake Bay.

The policy changes requested by this resolution would prohibit the large vessels owned by a foreign country from overharvesting the bait fish that are vital to the future of our fish populations in the Bay as they have done in the past. While this form of fishing is illegal in Maryland, it is still permitted in the Virginia waters of the Chesapeake Bay. Reduction fishing in the Bay is done by the Omega Fish Oil Company, which used to be a Virginia-based company but has now been sold to a foreign country. The reduction fishery has the ability to take 26% of the total Atlantic Coast menhaden quota from Maine to Florida from the Chesapeake Bay. This poses a substantial threat to the billions of dollars in economic impact and thousands of jobs that are associated with both commercial and recreational fishing within the Bay. The reduction fishery in the Chesapeake Bay threatens the population of fish species like striped bass, trout, drum, shad, and bluefish, all of which have seen alarming trends in their populations.

It is important to be very aware that that Maryland does not allow this type of reduction fishing, nor the bycatch allowed with reduction fishing. Menhaden are principally harvested in this State to use as bait for other fish or crabs. Therefore, this resolution would not impact any of our local Maryland watermen, sport fishermen, or outdoorsmen. It is important that the General Assembly recognizes that the commercial watermen, the charter boat captains, and the sport fishermen are on the same page in supporting this resolution.

It is time to tell Virginia that enough is enough. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Joint Resolution 6. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Bailey".

Senator Jack Bailey
District 29
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties