“THE FUTURE OF STRIPED BASS IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY AND THEIR DEPENDENCY ON ATLANTIC MENHADEN”

Testimony in Support of
Senate Joint Resolution 6

March 1, 2022

Phil Zalesak
President, www.smrfo.org

* **Microphones off unless speaking during meeting***

MD Recreational Fishing Organizations Supporting Senate Joint Resolution 6

Annapolis Anglers' Club
Atlantic Coast Sport Fishing Association
Frederick Saltwater Anglers
Kent Island Fishermen
Mid-Shore Fishing Club
North Bay Fishing Club
Northwest Fishing Club
Severn River Rod and Keg Club
Southern MD Recreational Fishing Org
Susquehanna Fishing Club

Kevin McMenamin*
Buddy Seigel*
Chris Linnetty*
Bert Olmstead*
Tom Wilkinson*
Stan Cebula*
Mark Kurth*
Skip Zink*
Phil Zalesak*
Jim Cappetta*

* Confirmed by Email

Atlantic Menhaden Harvestiing

Striped Bass Economic Summary For Maryland for 2016

Recreational Fishery Jobs: 10,193

Recreational Fishery Income: $496,859,800

Recreational Fishery GDP: $802,791,200

Comparisons Between the Fisheries

Table MD-8. Comparison of commercial and recreational impacts: Maryland 2016

	Commercial Fishery	Recreational Fishery	Total	Commercial Fishery	Recreational Fishery	Total
Pounds landed (000s)	1,709.4	10,919.1	12628.5	14%	86%	100%
Jobs supported	584	10,193	10,777	5%	95%	100%
Income ($000s)	$12,569.6	$496,859.8	$509,429.7	2%	98%	100%
GDP ($000s)	$17,109.7	$802,791.2	$819,900.9	2%	98%	100%

The Economic Contributions of Recreational and Commercial Striped Bass Fishing, Southwick Associates, page 26, 4/12/19

Science Summary

Chesapeake Bay Contribution to Coastal Stock

"Tagging estimates gave varying contribution rates on the basis of fishing mortality scenarios. Kneebone is the most recent published estimates. In general we can say that Chesapeake contributes >50% and perhaps >60% of the coastal stock" Dr. David Secor, Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, 12/1/20

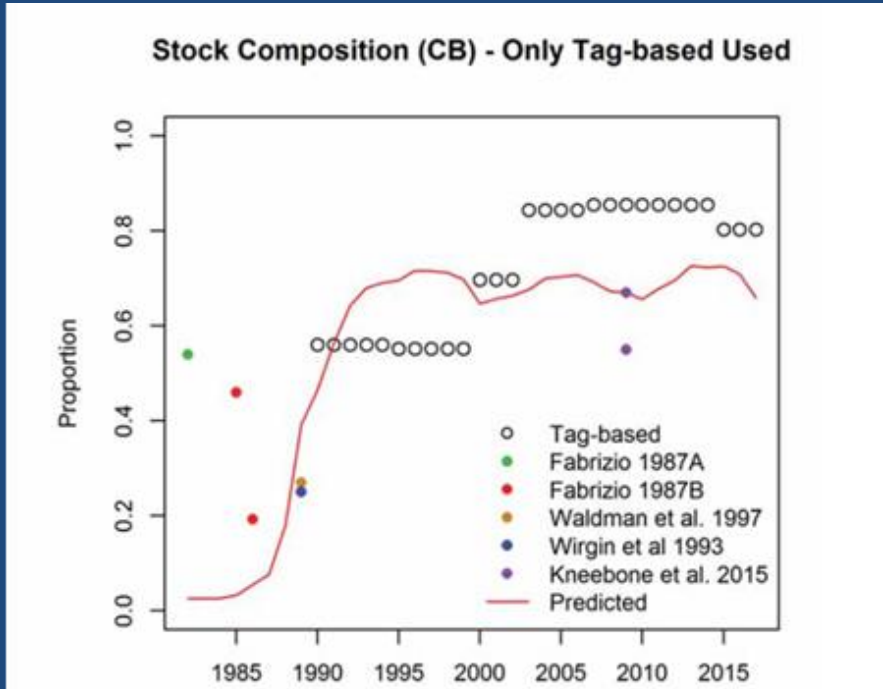
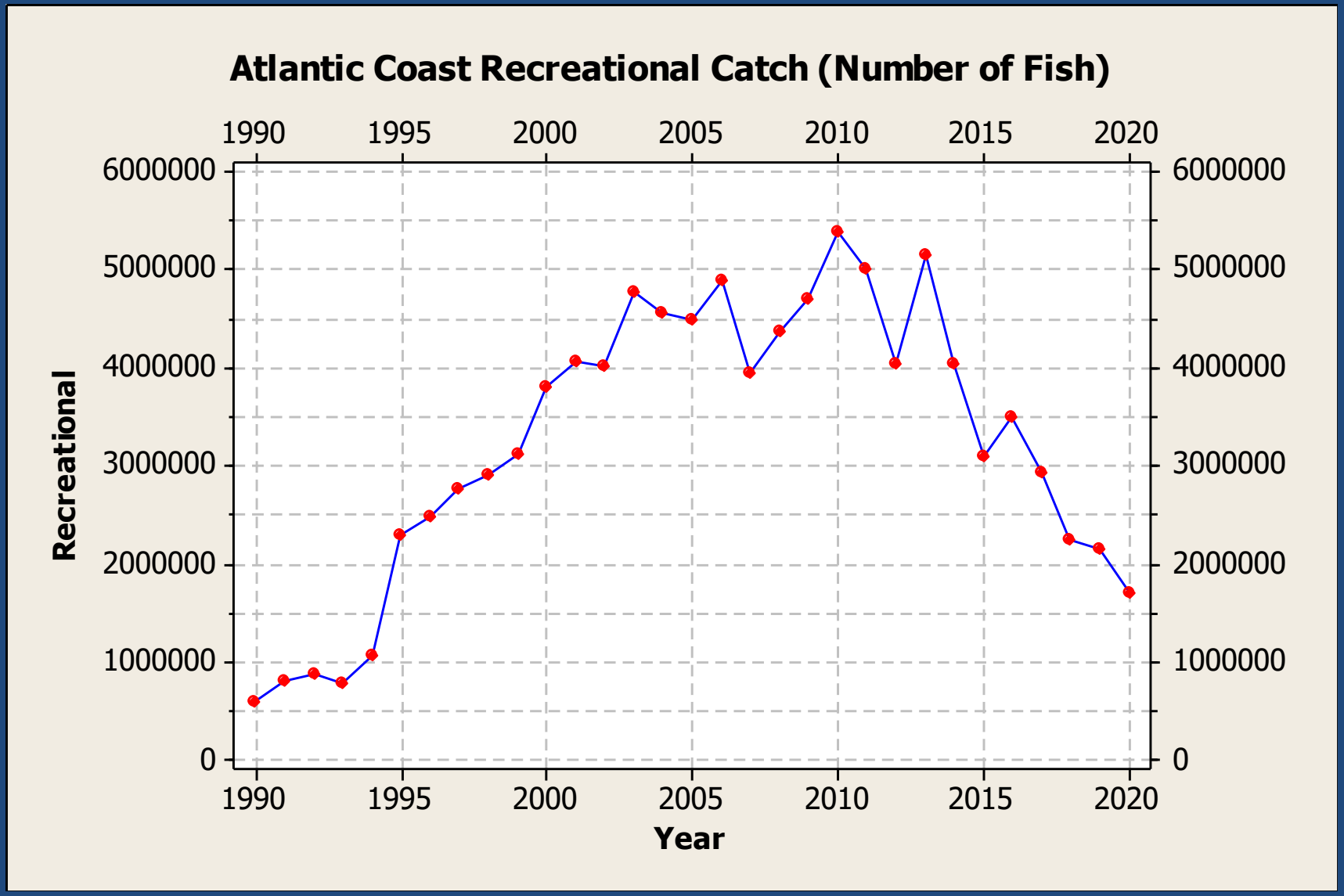


Figure B7.9. Observed versus predicted stock composition for the Chesapeake Bay stock. Literature values not used in the model fitting are indicted by the solid circles for comparison.

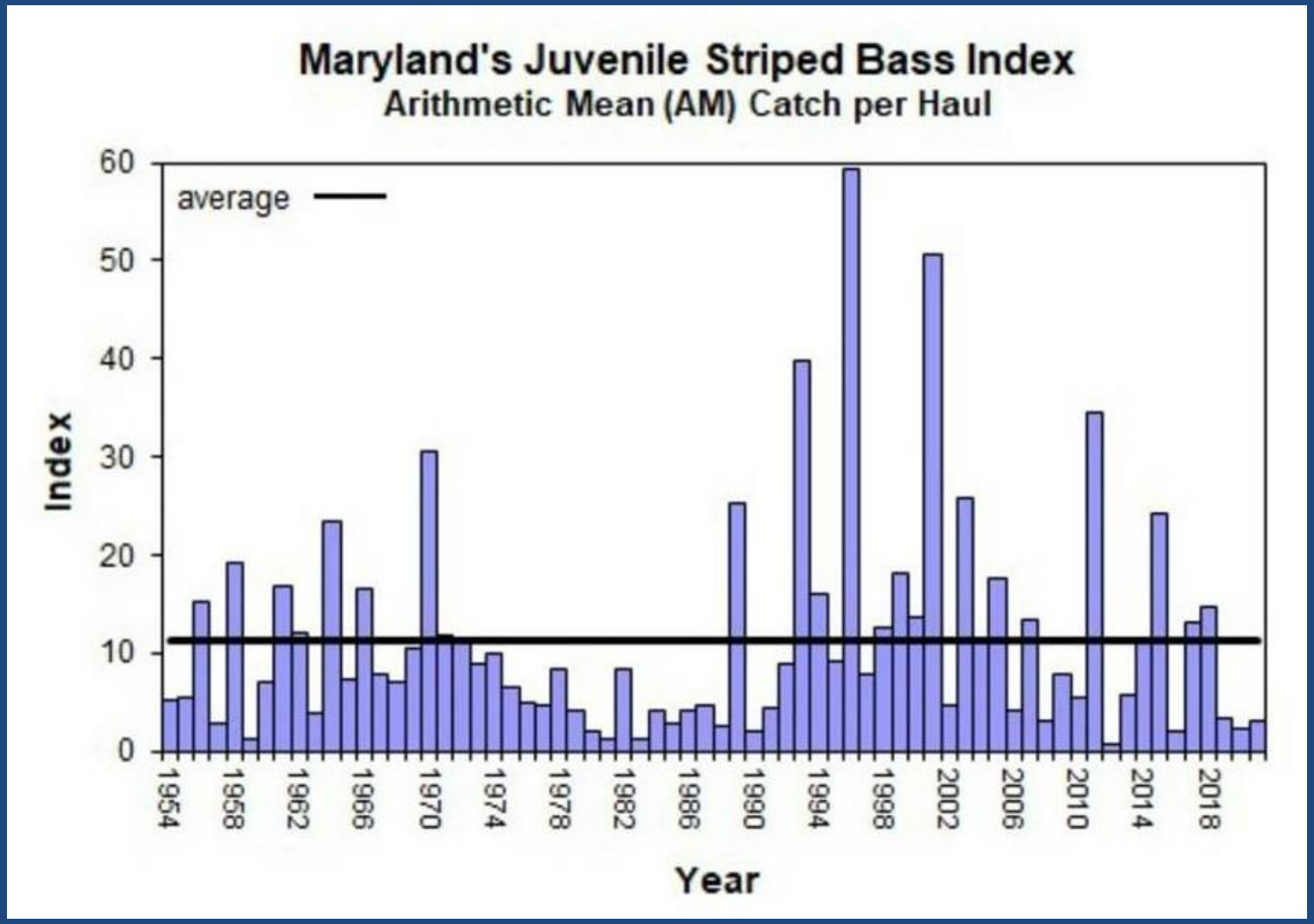
Reference: 66th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop, April 2019

Striped Bass Recreational Harvest Trend



Ref: Draft Amendment 7 Striped Bass Fishery, Management Plan, page 130 , 2/4/2022

Young of the Year Index



Ref: https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2021/10/15/chesapeake-bay-2021-young-of-year-survey-results-announced/

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Allocation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 20, 2020

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Approves TAC for 2021-2022

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board (Board) approved a total allowable catch (TAC) of 194,400 metric tons (mt) for the 2021 and 2022 fishing seasons, which represents a 10% reduction from the 2018-2020 TAC level. The 2021-2022 TAC was set based on the ecological reference points (ERPs) approved by the Board in August, and reaffirms the Board's commitment to manage the fishery in a way that accounts for the species role as a forage fish.

"This TAC represents a measured and deliberate way for this Board to move into the realm of ecosystem-based management," said Board Chair Spud Woodward of Georgia. "The TAC strikes a balance between stakeholder interests to maintain harvest on menhaden at recent levels, while also allowing the ERP models to do what they are intended to do."

Based on projections, the TAC is estimated to have a 58.5% and 52.5% probability of exceeding the ERP fishing mortality (*F*) target in the first and second year, respectively. The TAC will be made available to the states based on the state-by-state allocation established by Amendment 3 (see accompanying table for 2021 and 2022 based on a TAC of 194,400 mt).

2021-2022 ATLANTIC MENHADEN QUOTAS

		Metric Tons	Pounds
TAC		194,400	428,578,637
1% Set Aside*		1,944	4,285,786
TAC After Set Aside		192,456	424,292,851
STATE	ALLOCATION	QUOTA (MT)	QUOTA (LBS)
ME	0.52%	995	2,194,080
NH	0.50%	962	2,121,582
MA	1.27%	2,453	5,407,708
RI	0.52%	996	2,196,488
CT	0.52%	993	2,188,342
NY	0.69%	1,330	2,931,091
NJ	10.87%	20,925	46,131,966
PA	0.50%	962	2,121,464
DE	0.51%	986	2,174,821
MD	1.89%	3,634	8,011,402
PRFC	1.07%	2,066	4,554,267
VA	78.66%	151,392	333,761,875
NC	0.96%	1,840	4,056,588
SC	0.50%	962	2,121,464
GA	0.50%	962	2,121,464
FL	0.52%	997	2,198,250
TOTAL	100%	192,456	424,292,851

*1% of the TAC is set aside for episodic events, the remaining TAC is allocated to the states per the provisions of Amendment 3. Quotas may be adjusted pending final 2020 landings and the redistribution of any relinquished quota.

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Allocation

51,000 metric tons is over
26% of the total allowable catch for
the entire Atlantic Coast

Atlantic Menhaden Allocation

The Center for Conservation Biology

William & Mary

20 August 2020

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The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor, State of Virginia
PO Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam,

The menhaden is a keystone fish within the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Many of our most iconic species including the bald eagle, osprey, great blue heron and brown pelican depend on menhaden stocks to sustain their breeding populations within the Bay. Other species such as common loons and northern gannets that stage within the Chesapeake also depend on menhaden to fuel their migrations. Approximately 30% of the North Atlantic gannet population comes into the Bay during the spring to feed on menhaden before flying north to breeding grounds in Newfoundland.

Deep withdraws of menhaden stocks for the reduction fishery is having an impact on consumer species. We have conducted fieldwork with osprey throughout the lower Chesapeake Bay for 50 years and data demonstrate ongoing impacts. Through three generations of graduate students (1975-2006) we have observed shifts in diet and an associated reduction in productivity. Fish delivery rates were more than three times higher in 1975 compared to 2006. Menhaden, once the dominant fish in the diet now represents less than 30%. Shifts in diet away from menhaden have been coincident with a 90% reduction in menhaden stocks (Maryland, DNR haul surveys). No other fish species available to consumers provides the energy content of menhaden. Reductions in menhaden stocks have caused osprey productivity to decline to below DDT-era rates. These rates are insufficient to support the osprey population within the main stem of the Bay.

Menhaden provide critical ecosystem services within the Chesapeake Bay. We request that the needs of the broader ecosystem be considered when setting harvest policy and that menhaden stocks be maintained at levels that support a healthy Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

Sincerely,

Bryan Watts

Bryan D. Watts, Ph.D.
Mitchell A. Byrd Professor of Conservation Biology
Director, Center for Conservation Biology
College of William and Mary

Atlantic Menhaden Allocation
William and Mary College

"Reductions in menhaden stocks have caused osprey productivity to decline to below DDT-era rates.

These rates are insufficient to support the osprey population within the main stem of the Bay."

Bryan D. Watts, Ph.D.

Reference: Letter to Governor Ralph Northam, 8/20/20

Conclusion

Support Senate Joint Resolution 6:

"General Assembly requests the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to consider **prohibiting the commercial reduction fishing of Atlantic menhaden**, including the use of purse seines and spotter planes, in the Chesapeake Bay"

Backup

Striped Bass Dependency on Atlantic Menhaden

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 6, 2020

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Adopts Ecological Reference Points

Arlington, VA – The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved the use of ecological reference points (ERPs) in the management of Atlantic menhaden. By adopting ERPs, the Board will be accounting for the species' role as an important forage fish. The 2020 Atlantic menhaden benchmark assessments, which were endorsed by an independent panel of fisheries scientists, used the Northwest Atlantic Coastal Shelf Model of Intermediate Complexity for Ecosystems (NWACS-MICE) in combination with the single-species model (Beaufort Assessment Model or BAM) to develop Atlantic menhaden ERPs by evaluating trade-offs between menhaden harvest and predator biomass.

Striped Bass Dependency on Atlantic Menhaden

Atlantic striped bass was the focal species for the ERP definitions because it was the most sensitive predator fish species to Atlantic menhaden harvest in the model, so an ERP target and threshold that sustained striped bass would likely provide sufficient forage for other predators under current ecosystem conditions. For the development of the ERPS, all other focal species in the model (bluefish, weakfish, spiny dogfish, and Atlantic herring) were assumed to be fished at 2017 levels.

In addition to adopting ERPs, the Board discussed setting fishery specifications for 2021-2022. In 2017, the Board set the total allowable catch (TAC) at 216,000 metric tons for 2018-2019, and then maintained that TAC for 2020 with the expectation that it would be set in future years using ERPs. With the adoption of ERPs, the Board tasked the Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee to run a projection analysis to provide a variety of TAC scenarios and their risk of exceeding the ERP *F* target to compare in setting specifications for 2021-2022. The Board will review the projection analysis at the Annual Meeting in October and then determine a TAC for 2021-2022. As stated in Amendment 3, if a TAC is not set at the Annual Meeting, the TAC from the previous year will be maintained.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Allocation

"Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap - The annual total allowable harvest from the Chesapeake Bay by the reduction fishery is limited to no more than 51,000 mt. Harvest above the cap in any given year will be deducted from the next year's allowable harvest. Any amount of un-landed fish under the cap cannot be rolled over into the subsequent year. As a result, the cap in a given year cannot exceed 51,000 mt"

Reference: ASMFC Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden, November 2017, page v

Atlantic Menhaden Allocation
Salisbury University

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Legislative District 29
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The Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus

The Sportsmen's Best Friend in Annapolis

October 21, 2021

Steven G. Bowman
VMRC Chairman
Building 96, 380 Fenwick Road
Ft. Monroe, Virginia 23651

RE: "The Most Important Fish in the Sea" – IMMEDIATE ACTION

Mr. Bowman:

Each year the number of menhaden surviving the Virginia netting gauntlet to successfully reach Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake Bay is declining. This scientifically documented fact is detrimental to both avian and marine species dependent upon the "Most Important Fish in the Sea". This must change.

On October 15, 2021, a fishery biology professor from Salisbury University (Dr. Noah Bressman, PhD) formally addressed the dire menhaden issue in a statement to Maryland's DNR Secretary, et al. For the record, the Maryland's Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus within the Maryland General Assembly fully supports the position taken by Dr. Bressman and urges time-sensitive compliance by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission.

Here's what Dr. Bressman stated:

> "Currently, the Virginia-based menhaden fishery is overfishing the stock of Atlantic Menhaden in and around the Chesapeake Bay, which is preventing this important forage fish from making its way into the bay and its tributaries. As an important prey item for many important species in the bay, such as Striped Bass and Osprey, the disappearance of most of the menhaden from the bay is contributing to the disappearance of many species that rely on menhaden.

Virginia has been allotted about 75% of the entire Atlantic Coast's quota, which is a drastically disproportionate amount relative to its coastline. Additionally, much of their harvesting occurs as menhaden migrate into the bay, where they enter Maryland's waters. What this essentially means is 75% of the quota for the entire Atlantic Coast is being taken in the bay or just before they enter the bay. While this may not be causing overfishing for the entire Atlantic Coast based on quotas, because all of these fish are being taken from essentially just the bay, it is having locally drastic effects on the ecosystem.

Atlantic Menhaden Allocation
Salisbury University

"Currently, the Virginia based-menhaden fishery is overfishing the stock of Atlantic Menhaden in and around the Chesapeake Bay, which is preventing this important forage fish from making its way into the bay and its tributaries.

As an important prey item for many important species in the bay, such as Striped Bass and Osprey, the disappearance of most of the menhaden from the bay is contributing to the disappearance of many species that rely on menhaden."

Dr. Noah Bressman, Salisbury University,

Ref: Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus letter of October 21, 2021