SenatorBailey_FAV_SB87.pdf
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Position: FAV

JACK BAILEY
Legislative District 29
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Budget & Taxation Committee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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February 4, 2025

Senate Bill 87 – Fisheries – Striped Bass or Rockfish – Juvenile Survey

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 87. This bill would expand the scope of the annual young-of-the-year juvenile survey of striped bass by requiring this survey to be conducted in the central region of the Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

Each year, the Department of Natural Resources conducts young-of-the-year surveys that provide important data on juvenile fish in our State's waterways. This data is critical to measuring the success of Maryland's striped bass stocks and is used by DNR as part of setting the State's fishery management policies and regulations.

DNR has conducted this survey annually since 1954. This data is currently taken at sites in the Susquehanna Flats in the northern portion of the Chesapeake Bay and at several tributaries in the southern part of the Bay, namely the Chaptico, Nanticoke, Potomac, and Patuxent Rivers. These have been the locations where fish spawning has traditionally occurred.

However, no surveys are currently performed in the center of the Bay. We know that spawning patterns have changed since these original survey sites were established. Changes in the water level as well as the presence of invasive species have had a significant impact on the ecosystem of the Bay.

Senate Bill 87 will give us more data to better inform our State's decision making with regards to striped bass. This will give our State a fuller picture of fish spawning activity in the Chesapeake Bay by including data from all regions of the Bay. These sites are intended to be supplemental to, and not supplant or change, the current sampling sites. The bill requires between 12 and 20 new sampling sites in the central region of the Bay. These can be located in the Magothy River, the Severn River, the Chester River, the South River, the West River, Eastern Bay, or the Miles River.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 87. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Senator Jack Bailey

SB87 Fisheries - Striped Bass or Rockfish - Juveni

Uploaded by: Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio

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February 4, 2025

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
The Honorable Cheryl Kagan
Vice Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman and Vice Chair Kagan,

We are writing to express our **support** for **Senate Bill 87 Fisheries - Striped Bass or Rockfish - Juvenile Survey.**

Senate Bill 87 expands the scope of the annual young-of-the-year juvenile striped bass survey by adding additional sampling sites in the Chesapeake Bay. Each year, Maryland's Young-of-Year Striped Bass Survey provides important information on the reproductive success of striped bass. The survey, which has been conducted since the 1950s, also helps identify trends through the collection of long-term data. Biologists, fisheries management experts, and commercial industry members, however, are noting shifts in the migration and spawning patterns of Maryland's striped bass. These shifts are likely driven by changing weather patterns, water quality, invasive species, and habitat loss. We believe it is important to better understand these shifts by collecting additional data in other regions of the Bay. Adding new sampling sites will help build on the success of the Young-of-Year Survey and provide informative data that acknowledges our changing environment.

We thank you in advance for your consideration and respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 87.

Sincerely,

Herman Jeffrey Harrison
President

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SB 87 - CBF - UNF.pdf
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Position: UNF

CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

Senate Bill 87
Fisheries – Striped Bass or Rockfish – Juvenile Survey

Date:	February 4, 2024	Position:	**UNFAVORABLE**
To:	Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee	From:	Allison Colden, Executive Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **OPPOSES Senate Bill 87.** SB 87 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.

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.

SB 87 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. Based on concerns from stakeholders and the General Assembly, DNR has initiated an effort to evaluate the efficacy of current survey methods and the root causes of recent poor striped bass reproduction in Chesapeake Bay. This Chesapeake Bay Program-sponsored review is scheduled to kick off in mid-February 2025.

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. However, instead of codifying specific sample locations, we urge the Committee to allow DNR to confer with academic partners on the latest striped bass science and vet any proposed changes with technical staff to ensure there would be no detrimental effects of changing the current survey design.

CBF urges the Committee's UNFAVORABLE report on SB 87.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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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.

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Uploaded by: Lynn Fegley
Position: UNF

MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 4, 2025

BILL NUMBER: **Senate Bill 87 – First Reader**

SHORT TITLE**: Fisheries - Striped Bass or Rockfish - Juvenile Survey**

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: **OPPOSE**

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

The Department opposes Senate Bill SB87. The existing Striped Bass Young-of-the-Year (YOY) Survey provides results that have been proven scientifically valid and are mirrored by similar surveys in Maryland and other states along the Atlantic Coast.This survey helps scientists track how many striped bass are expected to be available to catch in the next 4-5 years.

The survey focuses on striped bass that are approximately 2 inches long in July, having just hatched from eggs in the previous 3 months. They are referred to as young-of-year (YOY) or juvenile fish. The survey does not study fish "approximately 18 inches in length." A fish this size is approximately 4 years old.

The study has been conducted since 1954, has been subject to independent peer review, and is accepted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission as a reliable index of future striped bass abundance. Survey results have been reviewed and validated several times as reliable indicators of annual spawning success.

Striped bass spawning areas were first identified in the 1950s by documenting the presence of striped bass eggs. Eleven spawning areas were documented: Upper Bay, Potomac River, Choptank River, Nanticoke River, Patuxent River, Wicomico River, Blackwater River, Pocomoke River, Transquaking River, Chester River, Manokin River. Rivers sampled that did **not** produce striped bass eggs were the Big Annemessex, Bush, Gunpowder, Miles, Severn, and Wye East.

Twenty-two YOY survey sites are located in the 4 largest spawning areas: Upper Bay, Potomac River, Choptank River, Nanticoke River. These areas represent approximately 96% of the known spawning area in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay. At sites distributed through the areas that did not produce striped bass eggs, DNR staff routinely conduct fish surveys for other species, so data are available to validate the results from the spawning areas. Results of the juvenile survey indicate if annual reproduction was average, above-average, or below-average. This information is important to fisheries managers because striped bass populations are dependent on occasional years of above-average reproduction.

Contact: Dylan Behler, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
dylan.behler@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-924-0891 (cell)

The strength of the survey data is the consistent methods over a long time period. Consistent methods at the same locations allow year-to-year comparisons. Survey results are a measure of striped bass spawning success. Adding new survey areas will not allow valid comparisons to previous years.

Fish community data exists from multiple rivers listed in Senate Bill SB87. Survey methods similar to those of the Striped Bass YOY Survey have been used to monitor fish populations in several mid-Bay rivers since the mid-1990s. Results from Chester and Patapsco rivers offer the most complete time-series and closely resemble trends documented by the Striped Bass YOY Survey. Results from the South, West, Miles, Magothy, Patapsco, Rhode and Tred Avon rivers show poor reproduction in recent years, just as the Striped Bass YOY survey does. Results from these additional surveys are statistically correlated with results of the existing Striped Bass YOY Survey. These monitoring efforts would alert DNR scientists if striped bass spawning was shifting into other areas.

In 2024, DNR staff conducted fish surveys at 21 sites distributed through the West, Miles, Magothy, Patapsco, Rhode and Tred Avon rivers. Results from these areas were similar to those of the existing Striped Bass YOY Survey. If data from these additional rivers were included in the calculation of the Juvenile Striped Bass Index, the index would be lowered from 2.0 to 1.2. This is strong evidence that these rivers are not supporting unknown populations of YOY striped bass. Poor striped bass spawning success in recent years is a wide-spread phenomenon, with similar trends in New York, New Jersey, and Virginia surveys.

In February 2025, the Chesapeake Bay Program is bringing together regional fisheries scientists to review our survey designs and discuss factors that may be contributing to low recruitment in the Chesapeake Bay. Results will be shared with the public, and appropriate next steps will be addressed. DNR has concerns that if recommendations are provided by this workshop to conduct additional sampling, limited resources will be further strained if they need to comply with legislated survey design.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A similar bill was introduced in 2024 (SB711/HB1232).

BILL EXPLANATION

The bill requires the Department to add up to 20 additional survey sampling sites for the young-of-the-year juvenile striped bass survey in certain state waters.