



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

March 10, 2026

BILL NUMBER: **SENATE BILL 559 - FIRST READER**

SHORT TITLE: **NATURAL RESOURCES – RECREATIONAL STRIPED BASS CATCH – REPORTING**

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department supports Senate Bill 559 with amendments. The bill would require a mandatory reporting system to be created for recreational fishing licensees harvesting striped bass.

The agency supports obtaining recreational fishing and effort information. In fact, the department has been in active conversations with our state partners in states like North Carolina, which is in the process of building out a recreational reporting program and app, and has taken steps to hire a Recreational Reporting Program Manager to help oversee these efforts. Through our conversations with other states, we have learned about the challenges of mandating reporting and have begun to understand how we might best target outreach efforts to collect accurate, usable data.

Amending this bill to create a broader program would allow the department to develop a workplan to create a fiscally responsible and scientifically useful data collection system for Maryland. The department has discussed these amendments with the bill sponsor and shared them ahead of the hearing.

The Department’s Fishing and Boating Services workplan for 2026 made recreational fishery reporting a priority. The Department would like to create a Recreational Fishery Data Collection Program, including using a position as key staff for that program. The program would be tasked with coming up with a workplan for the program to collect recreational fishing and effort data in a method that would be scientifically useful for fishery management in Maryland. The agency’s amendments would create this program in 2026 and require a work plan be finalized and shared by the end of 2027.

Currently, the Department receives federal funds to collect recreational fishing and harvest information through a program called the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS). APAIS is conducted throughout the coastal states. Anglers are intercepted when they have completed a fishing trip and requested to complete a voluntary survey. The survey focuses on tidal fishing (saltwater) in various locations throughout the bay and coast. Data collected includes demographics, effort, number of fish caught and/or released, and lengths and weight of the fish kept. The information is submitted to NOAA to be used in various fish stock assessments. In conjunction with APAIS, NOAA also conducts a Fishing Effort Survey to obtain information from private anglers on fishing effort through a mail survey and NOAA conducts a For-Hire Survey to obtain similar information from charter/for-hire captains.

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NOAA very recently announced an initiative called the Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (RAPID), which is designed to modernize data collection and improve state-federal cooperation in managing recreational fisheries. It focuses on enhancing the accuracy and timeliness of catch data, addressing regional, data-driven needs, and strengthening partnerships for sustainable fishing. Their goal is to increase data precision, usability, and credibility to ensure both the sustainability of fisheries and continued access for the angling community. While recognizing that a "one-size-fits-all" model is not effective, NOAA's RAPID is designed to be regional, flexible, and state-led, and increased federal funding will be utilized to accomplish its goals.

The Department also includes voluntary survey questions for anglers to respond to when obtaining a Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Boat License. Since 2023, information has been collected on the annual number of fish trips and frequently caught species, and can be found in the Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License and Recreational Fishing Pilot Program Report. While the survey questions provide information to the Department on recreational fishing, it was not designed to be used in fish population assessment.

Taking all of the existing recreational fishery data collection into account, while also learning from other state data collection systems, would benefit Maryland in adding to its recreational fishery data collection through new means in the near future under the work that would be performed by the program.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the 2022 session of Maryland's General Assembly, legislation (House Bill 601/Senate Bill 455) was passed directing the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR; Department) to undertake certain activities designed to improve the collection of recreational fishery data. That data collection is occurring under the MD Outdoors Licensing System.

BILL EXPLANATION

This bill requires every person recreationally catching striped bass in the Chesapeake Bay, state waters of the Atlantic Ocean and coastal bays who has a Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing license or registration to report information to the Department of Natural Resources through the use of a mobile application or by other means for those individuals without internet access.

BY:

(To be offered in the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 559
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 2, strike “**Striped Bass Catch – Reporting**” and substitute “**Fishery Data Collection Program**”; strike beginning with “every” in line 3 down through “requirements” in line 10 and substitute “the Department of Natural Resources to establish the Recreational Fishery Data Collection Program to collect certain data and establish a certain workplan; and generally relating to data collection”; strike in their entirety lines 11 through 20, inclusive; and in line 22, strike “the Laws of Maryland read as follows”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 1 through 2, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with line 23 on page 1 through line 22 on page 2, inclusive, and substitute:

“(a) By December 31, 2026, the Department of Natural Resources shall establish the Recreational Fishery Data Collection Program.

“(b) The purpose of the Recreational Fishery Data Collection Program is for the Department of Natural Resources to collect data and establish a workplan for the development and implementation of a data collection system for recreational anglers in Maryland.

“(c) Under the Recreational Fishery Data Collection Program, the Department of Natural Resources may:

(1) Coordinate with state and federal partners;

(2) Survey and collect data on other states’ recreational fishing reporting programs; and

(3) Enter into a contract for the development and implementation of a data collection system for recreational anglers.

“(d) On or before December 31, 2027, the Department shall submit a report to the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee and the House Environment and Transportation Committee, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, on the activities of the Recreational Fishery Data Collection Program, including a workplan for how the Department will implement a data collection system for recreational anglers.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2026. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 3 months and, at the end of December 31, 2027, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.”.