



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

---

## Senate Bill 559

### Natural Resources – Recreational Striped Bass Catch - Reporting

**Date:** March 10, 2026

**To:** Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

**Position:** **FAV. WITH AMENDMENT**

**From:** Allison Colden, Ph.D.,  
MD Executive Director

---

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS SB 559 WITH AMENDMENTS**. SB 559, as drafted, requires every person who catches striped bass under a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license or registration to report the catch to the Department of Natural Resources.

Striped bass are an iconic species of Chesapeake Bay and Maryland's state fish, a designation that reflects not only its cultural foundation and value to Maryland fisheries, but also its biological connection to Maryland's waters. Chesapeake Bay striped bass spawning areas and nursery habitat account for more than 70 percent of the coastal migratory striped bass population. Striped bass are highly prized by recreational anglers, who contribute \$767 million in economic output and support more than 5,000 Maryland jobs annually.<sup>1</sup>

To improve the management of the striped bass fishery, Chapter 587 of 2020 required DNR to conduct a study on methods of obtaining more accurate harvest data for the recreational striped bass fishery. Chapters 409 and 410 of 2022 established a Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License Pilot Program in DNR to collect data regarding individuals fishing under a consolidated Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport boat license. Recognizing the importance of timely, accurate data in managing the striped bass fishery, CBF supported both legislative initiatives and tracked the activities of the Task Force and pilot program.

While SB 559 seems like the next reasonable step in implementing the Task Force recommendations, the bill requirements go beyond what is needed to develop a robust estimate of striped bass fishing effort and harvest in Maryland. Requiring every angler to report their catch is typically only feasible in fisheries with limited participants that operate in smaller geographies so that self-reported data can be ground-truthed by biologists. Maryland's recreational striped bass fishery draws nearly 1 million anglers to the state each year making full compliance with this census-based method nearly impossible. It is also not necessary. Instead, we suggest that DNR focus on developing a statistically robust state-based survey for the striped bass fishery that complements existing federal survey instruments and focuses on fishing modes and times of year with the greatest statistical uncertainty. A robust statistical survey design will balance the needs to improve recreational fishery data with the realities of resource limitations within state agencies.

**CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report WITH AMENDMENTS on SB 559.**

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

---

<sup>1</sup> Southwick Associates. 2019. Economic Contributions of Recreational Fishing. <https://asafishing.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ASACongressional-Fishing-Econtributions-Report-2019-01-31.pdf>

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

*The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.*