

**SenatorBailey\_FAV\_SB559.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jack Bailey

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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March 10, 2026

**Senate Bill 559 – Natural Resources - Recreational Striped Bass Catch - Reporting**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 559. This bill would provide data to ensure the accuracy of Maryland's striped bass harvest data by requiring 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 (DNR).

This legislation will help resolve a long-standing concern with Maryland's striped bass harvest data. Effective management of the striped bass fishery requires accurate catch data for both the recreational and commercial harvest. Even before my tenure in the legislature, House Bill 1148 of 2014 required the Department of Natural Resources to conduct a study on methods of obtaining more accurate harvest data for the recreational striped bass fishery. In 2020, I sponsored Senate Bill 882, which required DNR to repeat the study from 2014. In 2022, I sponsored Senate Bill 455, which establishes a Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License Pilot Program and a Task Force on Recreational Fishing Data Collection and Licensing to, among other things, study methods for improving the accuracy of catch and effort estimates in recreational fisheries. This issue has been thoroughly studied for more than 10 years, and the State has not been able to find any effective alternative way to obtain this data through current sampling methods.

Accurate information about the harvest of striped bass is critical to protecting and preserving the future of our State fish. Decisions about quotas and catch limits depend on knowing how many striped bass are harvested each year by both commercial and recreational users. Under current law and regulations, commercial striped bass harvesters and charter boats are required to report exact data with catch reports. There is no equivalent required reporting for recreational anglers. With approximately 218,000 recreational licensees and others who are allowed to fish without a license, recreational anglers can contribute significantly to the pressure that our State's striped bass population faces, even if each angler only catches one striped bass.

Maryland would not be the first state to implement such a reporting requirement. This December, North Carolina began requiring reporting for recreational catch of striped bass and other species of fish. Senate Bill 559 gives DNR flexibility on how to implement this requirement; however, the bill does specify that DNR must have a method for individuals who do not have Internet access to be able to make this report. As an example of one potential option, this February, DNR submitted a report required as part of last session's Joint Chairmen's Report exploring the feasibility of establishing a mobile application-based method of reporting the recreational catch of striped bass.

This bill is effective January 1, 2027, so it will go into effect at the start of next year's fishing season. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 559. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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

Senator Jack Bailey

**SB0559 favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sean Beck

Position: FAV

**SB0559 (2026) Favorable Report**  
**Sean Beck**

Atlantic Striped Bass are a driving force for recreational fishing along the East Coast as well as a sustainable source of seafood when managed properly. All along the Coast states use citizen scientist programs to monitor striped bass catch rates, fishing techniques, and sizes to better inform management policies. Nova Scotia, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maryland, and Virginia all have various implementations of citizen-scientist programs for monitoring stripers, as well as private organizations such as On The Water. This bill would allow Maryland to expand its own citizen data-driven initiative to help inform management decisions specific to the Chesapeake and coastal Maryland fisheries while providing latitude to the Department of Natural Resources on implementation details. So that we may better manage our striped bass fishery I ask for a favorable report on this bill.

**SB 559 - CBF - FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Allison Colden

Position: FWA



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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## 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

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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).

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<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>

**SB559\_Final 2.pdf**

Uploaded by: David Sikorski

Position: FWA

**Date:** 3/10/2026

**To:** Members of the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**Re: Support with Amendments — Senate Bill 559 – Recreational Striped Bass Catch Reporting**

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and other recreational fishing stakeholders, we offer **support for Senate Bill 559 if amended.**

We are deeply committed to **improving recreational fisheries data collection** and have long advised Maryland DNR and other regional and federal agencies to develop better tools to understand both angler activity and the health of our fisheries resources.

As participants in Maryland's **Recreational Fisheries Data Task Force (2022)**, and with broad experience supporting improvements to recreational fisheries management in other states and regions, we remain committed to working with state officials to implement meaningful and effective survey systems and regulations.

Instead of mandating a census of striped bass catch, we encourage the following considerations:

- **Leverage existing authority at DNR** to develop and implement focused recreational angler surveys and data collection systems.
- **Ensure alignment with ongoing federal changes** to recreational fishing survey approaches as improvements to national and regional programs continue to evolve.
- Recognize that the **Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP)**—a federal and state partnership administered by NOAA—has often fallen short of meeting stakeholder expectations for timely and precise fisheries data, particularly at the Chesapeake Bay scale.
- Support **state-focused and regionally coordinated survey systems** designed by fisheries professionals in the Chesapeake Bay region.
- Prioritize improved data collection for **key Chesapeake Bay recreational fisheries**, including striped bass, cobia, and red drum.
- Utilize existing data collection partnerships and structures to ensure the usability of any data collected in fisheries conservation and management programs.

We appreciate efforts to improve recreational fisheries data and stand ready to work with the Department and the General Assembly to shape this legislation so that it supports effective, science-based fisheries management.

Sincerely,

David Sikorski, Coastal Conservation  
Association Maryland & Rec. Data Task Force  
Chair

Mike Waine, American Sportfishing Association

Brett Fitzgerald, Angler Action Foundation

**SB0559\_DNR\_SWA\_EEE\_3-10-26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lydia McPherson

Position: FWA



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

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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**

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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.

Contact: Lydia McPherson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services  
[lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov](mailto:lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov) ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-875-7785 (cell)

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**

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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**

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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.”.

# **MDFB - Support with Amendments - SB643 Natural Res**

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: FWA



## Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035  
410-922-3426 | [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com)

March 10, 2026

**To:** Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

**From:** Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

**RE:** **Support with Amendments of SB643 Natural Resources - Hunting – Management**

On behalf of the more than 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I respectfully submit written testimony in support, with amendments, of SB643 – Natural Resources – Hunting – Management.

This legislation authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to permit Sunday deer population reduction on properties experiencing significant deer damage, adjusts Sunday hunting time restrictions for deer firearms season in several counties, and repeals the prohibition on Sunday hunting for migratory game birds—allowing DNR to authorize it when appropriate.

Deer damage remains one of the most urgent concerns for our members. It is estimated that deer cause at least \$8 million in losses annually to Maryland farms, and the true number is likely higher. Increasing opportunities for hunters to access the woods is one of the most effective tools available to help mitigate this damage. Expanding Sunday hunting will allow more hunters to participate, especially those whose work schedules limit them to weekends, and will provide an additional day of pressure on deer populations in the areas that need it most.

Maryland’s mix of rural, suburban, and urban landscapes makes it challenging to apply a single statewide standard for Sunday hunting. A blanket regulation cannot account for local conditions or the unique circumstances farmers face.

The bill’s authorization for DNR to issue Sunday hunting permits to farms with documented deer damage is a meaningful, targeted solution. It ensures that the farms most significantly impacted by deer have another tool to address escalating losses, without imposing a uniform statewide mandate.

We recognize and appreciate the concerns of the equine and trail-riding community, particularly their desire to use trails safely without unexpected interactions with hunters. The bill’s modifications—requiring a 10:30 a.m. hard stop, adding a 3 p.m. to sunset restriction, and creating a 25-yard setback from designated equestrian trails—demonstrate a thoughtful balance between safety and expanded hunting access. These provisions help protect trail users while still allowing farmers and hunters meaningful opportunities to manage deer populations.



## Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035  
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Maryland Farm Bureau requests one amendment: removal of the language on page 7, lines 1–8 authorizing Sunday hunting for migratory waterfowl.

Many Eastern Shore farms rely on guided goose and duck hunts as a critical source of supplemental income. Expanding migratory bird hunting to Sundays raises concerns about increased pressure on already limited populations. Bag limits for these species are set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, and harvest opportunities are already highly constrained. Allowing additional hunt days risks negatively affecting both waterfowl populations and the rural economies that depend on sustainable guided hunting.

For these reasons, the Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully requests a favorable report with the proposed amendment removing the Sunday migratory waterfowl hunting authorization.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough", written over a horizontal line.

Tyler Hough  
Director of Government Relations

*Please contact Tyler Hough, [though@marylandfb.org](mailto:though@marylandfb.org), with any questions*