



*Larry Hogan, Governor*  
*Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor*  
*Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary*  
*Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary*

**Bill Number:** Senate Joint Resolution 6

**Short Title:** Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission – Atlantic Menhaden – Prohibition on Commercial Reduction Fishing

**Department's Position:** Letter of Information

**Explanation of Department's Position**

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides the following information on SJ 6.

This bill is a resolution to urge the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to evaluate the population of Atlantic menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay and end the practice of purse seining for harvesting Atlantic menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay.

DNR agrees that menhaden, which are managed under the framework of the ASMFC, are an important species to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. As such, purse seining is already prohibited in Maryland waters.

Management of Atlantic menhaden in Virginia's portion of the Bay also occurs under the framework of the ASMFC. Primary responsibility for management was recently transitioned from Virginia's legislature to the Virginia Marine Resource Commission in 2020. Since this transition has taken place, Virginia has commenced a process of engaging a broad array of stakeholders in the scientific management of these fish.

According to ASMFC, the menhaden stock is currently healthy.

Maryland is a leader in working with ASMFC to develop conservative ecosystem reference points that were just adopted for the fishery summer 2020. This was both a major undertaking and accomplishment, and is key to ensuring a balanced approach to managing menhaden as both important for the commercial fishery and forage fish.

DNR believes that fishery management decisions should be rooted in science and within established frameworks and authorities like ASMFC. There is little precedent for ASMFC to direct a state on how to manage its quota (e.g., dictating particular gears, seasons, operating practices) so ASMFC is unlikely to support any action to prohibit a specific business from engaging in an established fishery. Initiating an action requiring specific management measures in other states through ASMFC may ultimately result in other states pursuing specific

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management measures in Maryland that are counter to our state's management goals and objectives.

That said, if Virginia were to prohibit purse seining in their waters, it is likely that the unharvested Atlantic menhaden would contribute to larger stocks of menhaden, which would provide forage for species such as striped bass, bluefish, dolphins, and osprey. A larger forage base of menhaden could provide for a more diverse and abundant Bay ecosystem, which could lead to positive fiscal impacts although these connections have not yet been scientifically quantified.

For any additional information, please feel free to contact our Legislative and Constituent Services Director, Bunky Luffman.