



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education

## House Bill 889 Fisheries – Striped Bass or Rockfish – Juvenile Survey

Date: February 19, 2024

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Position: **UNFAVORABLE**

From: Allison Colden,  
Executive Director

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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **OPPOSES House Bill 889**. HB 889 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.

HB 889 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 HB 889.**

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