

September 26, 2022

Governor Glenn Youngkin
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Youngkin,

As members of the boating and manufacturing community, we ask that you move menhaden reduction fishing out of the Chesapeake Bay until science demonstrates that high volume reduction fishing for menhaden can be allowed without negatively affecting the broader Bay ecosystem.

Saltwater recreational fishing is an economic powerhouse, especially for Virginia where fishing is enjoyed by 600,000 anglers annually, contributing \$465 million to the Commonwealth's economy and supporting 6,504 jobs.¹ The jobs created by these fisheries are the lifeblood of our coastal communities as more than 90 percent of the sportfishing and boating industry is made up of small businesses.

Atlantic menhaden play a vital role in maintaining the sportfishing economy and the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem by serving as the base of the food chain for many recreationally important species. Specifically, menhaden are critical to the diets of gamefish like striped bass, bluefish, weakfish, and more, that feed Americans and keep them coming to Virginia waters and spending money in our coastal communities. For example, the striped bass fishery is the largest marine recreational fishery in the U.S., driving \$166 million in recreational fishing activity in Virginia alone. However, the economic value of striped bass fishing to Virginia has declined by over 50 percent in the past decade.²

According to a scientific model, menhaden reduction fishing also contributes to a nearly 30 percent decline in striped bass numbers coast wide.³ The scientific linkage between menhaden as prey and striped bass as a main predator is undeniable. Therefore, the industrial menhaden fishery in the Chesapeake plays a role in the ability of striped bass to rebuild to healthy population levels. By removing more than 100 million pounds of menhaden every year from the Chesapeake Bay, the most important striped bass nursery on the East Coast, reduction fishing in Virginia is undermining the sportfishing economy and small businesses throughout the Commonwealth.

Governor Youngkin, we urge you to use your authority to move menhaden reduction fishing out of the Bay until science demonstrates that menhaden fishing can be allowed without negatively affecting the broader Bay ecosystem.

¹ Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2021, available at: https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2021-11/FEUS-2018-final-508_0.pdf

² The Economic Contributions of Recreational and Commercial Striped Bass Fishing, 2019, available at: <https://mcgrawconservation.org/wp-content/uploads/McGraw-Striped-Bass-Report-FINAL.pdf>

³ Evaluating Ecosystem-Based Reference Points for Atlantic Menhaden, 2017, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19425120.2017.1360420>

Moving menhaden reduction fishing out of the Bay will help to protect the health of the ecosystem and help grow Virginia's outdoor recreational economy, which benefits all Virginians.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Crews

Professional Bass Angler

President

Missile Baits



Captain John Satterly

Maritime Mayhem Charter Service



Captain Skip Feller

Rudee Tours



Michael Ebersberger

Manager

Angler's Sport Center



Captain Bill Pappas

Playin Hookey Charters



Kim Harrison

General Manager

Coleman PowerSports



Captain Chris Newsome

Bay Fly Fishing



Jeff Warriner

General Manager

Rugged Marine



Captain Bob Walter

Light Tackle Charters



Nick Loganadan

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Angler's Choice



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Editor-in-Chief
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Back River Rods &
Grading Scales Sportfishing



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FJ Neil Company, Inc.



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Captain Scott Gregg
Scott Gregg Outdoors



Matt Leusner
Co-Founder, CEO
Intent Tackle



Captain Jon Titherington
Salty Hooker Charters



Josh Fuld
President
Dark Matter Fishing



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Sho Nuf Charters



Anthony Whitehurst
Owner
Princess Anne Distributing Co.



John Bishop
Owner
Bishops Fishing Supply



Tony Nguyen
Owner
Wallace's Bait & Tackle

