

#### ACTION NEEDED BY VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

In Virginia, menhaden is the only marine fishery managed by the legislature, rather than by fishery experts at the state's own Marine Resources Commission. Thus, in order for Virginia to comply with the harvest cap, the legislature must adopt a policy that implements the catch limits as mandated by the ASMFC.



#### POTENTIAL CLOSURE OF VIRGINIA'S ENTIRE MENHADEN FISHERY

*The U.S. Secretary of Commerce, through the National Marine Fisheries Service, has the authority to shut down the entire fishery in state waters if a state fails to implement the required provisions of an ASMFC fisheries management plan.* The closure could affect Virginia's entire menhaden fishery — the larger industrial scale fishery, as well as the smaller bait fishery. The financial ramifications of such an action would be devastating with significant loss of jobs and revenue.



#### FOR MORE INFORMATION WHY MENHADEN MATTER TO VIRGINIA


- National Coalition for Marine Conservation, Ken Hinman (703) 777-0037
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Jeff Corbin (804) 780-1392
- Coastal Conservation Association, Dick Brame (910) 793-3098
- Environmental Defense, Kathleen Goldstein (202) 572-3243





[www.menhadenmatter.org](http://www.menhadenmatter.org)





## THE SCIENCE

 The total stock of Atlantic menhaden has declined, in terms of numbers of fish in the population, to levels approaching the overfished condition of the 1960s and 1970s. *Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment for Peer Review, ASMFC Stock Assessment Report No. 04-01 (Supplemental). ASMFC 2004.*

 Menhaden abundance is lowest in Chesapeake Bay, particularly for juvenile fish. Since the mid-1990s, the number of juvenile fish (age 0-2) has reached historic lows." *Analyses on the Status of the Atlantic Menhaden Stock. Vaughn et al. NOAA Fisheries, July 2002. Terms of Reference & Advisory Report for the Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Peer Review. ASMFC 2004.*

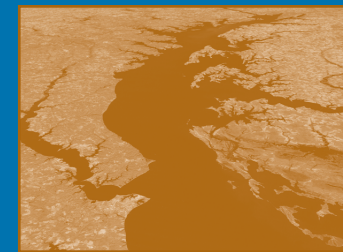
 The amount of menhaden consumed by striped bass, as a proportion of their total diet, is significantly reduced. *Striped Bass Predator-Prey Interactions in the Chesapeake Bay and Along the Atlantic Coast. Anthony Overton, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, 2003.*

 Chesapeake Bay striped bass have 10 to 25 percent of the body fat found in healthy fish. *Striped Bass Health. John Jacobs. University of Maryland Center for Environmental Studies. <<http://www.dnr-state.md.us/fisheries/oxford/stripedbass/>>*

 A majority of striped bass in Chesapeake Bay — 50 to 70 percent — are infected with a stress-released disease known as mycobacteriosis. *Mycobacteriosis in Striped Bass. U.S. Geological Survey Fish Health Branch, Leetown Science Center. Fact Sheet FHB 2002-01. August 2002.*

 In recent years, there has been an increase in natural mortality among Chesapeake Bay striped bass due to unknown causes. *Tag-Recapture Data from Chesapeake Bay Resident Striped Bass Indicates that Survival has Declined. Presented at the 60th Annual Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference, Ocean City, Maryland, April 27, 2004.*

# MENHADEN MATTER



to  
Virginia



# Menhaden Matter to virginia

## WHY IT IS CRITICAL VIRGINIA SUPPORT THE ASMFC DECISION TO CAP THE INDUSTRIAL HARVEST OF MENHADEN IN CHESAPEAKE BAY

In August 2005, after thorough review of data from leading scientists, months of deliberation and record public support, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) overwhelmingly voted to cap the industrial harvest of Atlantic Menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay. The cap will prevent an expansion of the large-scale reduction fishery while research is conducted on its impact on the health of the bay and the fish it supports, including striped bass and other valuable sport and commercial species. The cap — which will maintain the catch at recent levels — is to take effect for the 2006 fishing season and will last for five years. It will affect only the large-scale reduction fishery and not the bait fishery.

### MENHADEN MATTER

An alliance of regionally and nationally renowned recreational angler and environmental organizations, including the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Coastal Conservation Association, Environmental Defense and the National Coalition for Marine Conservation, believes that the only option for Virginia is to comply with federal law and adopt

and implement the menhaden harvest cap as mandated by the ASMFC, the 15-state commission that regulates shared fisheries on the East Coast. *Under the ASMFC compact, failure of Virginia's legislature to adopt the harvest cap would completely shut down Virginia's menhaden fishery and negatively impact the economy of Virginia's Northern Neck. Menhaden Matter advocates for a properly managed menhaden fishery, not the loss of the entire industry.*



### VIRGINIA — A PARTNER IN INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

For more than six decades, the Commonwealth of Virginia has been a proud member of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the multi-state regulatory body formed by Atlantic Coast states in 1942 in recognition that migratory fish do not adhere to political boundaries. The ASMFC is a deliberative body, coordinating the conservation and management of the states' shared near-shore fishery resources — marine, shellfish, and anadromous — for sustainable use. The ASMFC's decision-making is based on sound science and research from the nation's foremost experts in fisheries management.

Since 1981, the ASMFC has developed and implemented formal interstate fisheries management plans (FMPs). Every state has a voice and vote in the process, and agrees to abide by the ultimate decision made by the ASMFC's management bodies.



### THE MENHADEN FISHERY — PROTECTING THE RESOURCE AND THE INDUSTRY

Atlantic Menhaden is one of 22 species managed by the ASMFC. Often called “the most important fish in the sea,” menhaden serve as the primary food

source for striped bass and other economically important fish as well as a critical filter feeder for the Chesapeake Bay, with a filtering capacity second only to oysters, a once vibrant Virginia fishery that is now grossly depleted. Unfortunately, recent studies have shown that menhaden are also showing signs of depletion with overall numbers at historic lows and predators that depend on the fish as a principal food source, such as striped bass, are suffering from malnutrition, poor body condition and disease.

With most East Coast states' waters now closed to the industrial harvest of menhaden, 90 percent of the large-scale reduction landings are caught by one corporation, Omega Protein. Omega operates the last remaining reduction facility in Reedville, Virginia, where the small bony fish are processed into fish meal and oil. It is important to emphasize that the harvest cap is temporary — for the next five years — while critical research is conducted. During that time Omega Protein can harvest menhaden at recent levels, catching approximately 105,000 tons annually. **This approach will allow Omega Protein to operate profitably with no loss of jobs or income.**



### VIRGINIA'S OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE ASMFC COMPACT

Under federal law all ASMFC member states, including Virginia, are required to implement mandatory compliance measures incorporated in commission-approved fishery management plans (FMPs). The recently instituted cap on the industrial harvest of menhaden is just such a mandatory measure. Accordingly, Virginia is bound by compact to adopt and implement the cap in 2006 or risk a federally imposed moratorium on Virginia's entire menhaden fishery.