

# Building a Better Model for Menhaden Management

*A coalition of angling and environmental groups are working with lawmakers to improve management of critical forage fish in the Chesapeake Bay and beyond*

**Virtual ICAST Webinar Hosted by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership**

**When: July 16, 2020 at 11 a.m. ET**

**Link: (TBD)**

**Speakers:**

- **Matt Strickler, Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources**
- **Chris Moore, Senior Regional Ecosystem Scientist, Chesapeake Bay Foundation**
- **David Sikorski, Executive Director, Coastal Conservation Association-Maryland**
- **Chris Macaluso, Center for Marine Fisheries Director, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership**

A broad coalition of angling and boating groups and conservation organizations is working to advance and implement more science- and conservation-based management of Atlantic menhaden, an important forage fish that supports many sportfish populations.

Significant progress has been made since late 2019 in reining in menhaden overharvest in Virginia waters of the Chesapeake Bay: It began with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission finding Virginia out of compliance for allowing industrial fishing giant Omega Protein to exceed the Bay harvest cap for menhaden by more than 40 million pounds last year.

In December, U.S Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross upheld that finding after anglers, boating industry groups, and conservation organizations appealed to him to do the right thing. A moratorium on harvest in Virginia waters was declared until the state ensured compliance with the catch cap set by the ASMFC.

This spring, working with Governor Ralph Northam's administration and state legislators, anglers and conservationists prevailed again as Virginia lawmakers passed a bill to move menhaden management out of the political body of the legislature and into the more scientifically guided Marine Resources Commission. Virginia also established a Menhaden Management Advisory Committee with representatives from angling groups, commercial harvesters, the research community, and conservation organizations.

Progress continues to be made at the ASMFC as well to implement an ecological model of menhaden management that considers the fish's importance to the entire marine food web—that is expected by the end of 2020.

Our panel of fisheries management and water quality experts—including Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources Matt Strickler, Chesapeake Bay Foundation Scientist Chris Moore, and CCA-Maryland Executive Director David Sikorski—will discuss these improvements in menhaden management for the Chesapeake Bay and how far we have left to go. TRCP Marine Fisheries Director Chris Macaluso will explain how success in Virginia is a model for improving forage fish management in the Gulf of Mexico.