

# SUPPORT HB19

Topic: Studying Menhaden Ecology, Fishery Impacts, & Economic Importance

Bill Patron: Delegate Lee Ware

## OVERVIEW:

Menhaden are currently managed on a coastwide basis by the Atlantic State Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). Unfortunately, ASMFC doesn't have the resources to determine the population dynamics of menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay and is likely missing important regionally-specific population information.

This bill directs the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) to conduct a three-year study of the ecology, fishery impacts, and economic importance of the Atlantic menhaden population in Virginia's waters.

## Reasons to support

- Menhaden are a critical species to provide nourishment for other fish targeted by commercial and recreational fishing industries. A healthy menhaden population benefits both ecological and economic interests throughout the Bay region.
- Concerns about the removal of menhaden from the Virginia portion of the Chesapeake Bay are the primary reason ASMFC implemented a harvest cap on the Virginia reduction fishery in 2006. Unfortunately, this cap is based solely on historic landings and not scientific data on the population of menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay.
- The General Assembly passed SB1388 during the 2023 legislative session, which developed plans for studying menhaden in Virginia's waters. HB19 would direct VIMS to follow through on conducting the study.
- Menhaden research is more important than ever for the Chesapeake Bay region as the population has been suffering from low menhaden recruitment for over 20 years, and water quality and climate change may be altering both the number of menhaden in the Bay and the times they are present in the region.



CHESAPEAKE BAY  
FOUNDATION

*Saving a National Treasure*

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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit [www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker](http://www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker). VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.