

SUPPORT HB1049

Topic: Marine Resources Commission; Chesapeake Bay; menhaden reduction fishery; quota periods; observers.

Bill Patron: Delegate Betsy Carr (D-78)

OVERVIEW:

HB1049 would direct the Marine Resources Commission to develop and implement a quota period program for the Chesapeake Bay Menhaden Reduction Fishery Bay Cap and require fisheries observers on 10% of reduction fishing trips. The objective of quota period management is to better distribute reduction fishing effort throughout the season to mitigate potential negative impacts to the Chesapeake Bay's ecosystem. Requiring fisheries observers would ensure the collection of independent data on catch composition and weight—information that is currently not gathered by third-party professionals—and would strengthen science-based management of the fishery.

REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- A quota period management program would better distribute reduction fishing efforts and menhaden removals throughout the season.
- Quota periods would prevent concentrated pulses of high-volume menhaden removals from within the Chesapeake Bay estuary, ensuring menhaden-dependent predators have access to critical nutrients throughout the season.
- Menhaden dynamics in Chesapeake Bay are changing — this management program would provide a buffer against menhaden migration, population dynamics, and facilitate more menhaden making their way to Maryland waters.
- Requiring fisheries observers on reduction fishing trips is a common-sense way to collect essential data on fishing activity and interactions with non-target species. This information directly supports effective, science-based fisheries management.
- The menhaden reduction industry is the largest fishery on the Atlantic coast (by weight), yet it is not required to carry fishery observers, and observed trips have been very limited since 2008, according to NOAA Fisheries. Requiring observers to document catch composition, interactions with non-target species, and other fisheries data is long-overdue, and will support a healthier Chesapeake Bay.



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