



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 19, 2019

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Secretary of Commerce Finds Commonwealth of Virginia Out of Compliance with Atlantic Menhaden Amendment 3 *Menhaden Fishing in Virginia Waters to Close June 17, 2020 if 51,000 mt Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap Not Implemented*

Arlington, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission received notification today that the Secretary of Commerce concurs with the Commission’s finding that the Commonwealth of Virginia is out of compliance with Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. Specifically, the Commonwealth has failed to implement the 51,000 mt Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery cap (cap). In accordance with this finding, the Secretary has declared a moratorium on the Atlantic menhaden fisheries in Virginia waters, effective June 17, 2020. In order to avert the moratorium, the Commonwealth must effectively implement and enforce the cap prior to June 17th. This action was taken pursuant to the provisions of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (Atlantic Coastal Act) of 1993.

“I am grateful for the Secretary’s support of the Commission’s fisheries management process and, in particular, our efforts to manage Atlantic menhaden, an important forage species, in a precautionary manner,” stated ASMFC Chair Patrick C. Keliher of Maine. “The Secretarial backstop is a key provision of the Atlantic Coastal Act.”

In today’s letter from NOAA Fisheries transmitting its determination of noncompliance, it stated, “NOAA Fisheries also finds that this management measure is necessary for the conservation of the menhaden resource. The best available information shows that menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay are an important component of the overall health of the stock, and further that their role as forage for predator species in the Chesapeake Bay is critical to the marine environment.” The letter explains that the June closure was selected “to give Virginia the time necessary for its legislature to bring these regulations back into compliance.”

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species.