



U.S. Commerce Department Takes Action after Virginia Menhaden Limit Exceeded

19 DEC 2019

PRESS STATEMENT

(WASHINGTON, DC)—Following Omega Protein’s violation of the menhaden harvest cap in the Chesapeake Bay, the U.S. Department of Commerce has upheld the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (ASMFC) [non-compliance finding](#) against the Commonwealth of Virginia. In October, ASMFC found Virginia out of compliance after Omega Protein [announced](#) it had caught approximately 30 percent more menhaden than allowed under the harvest cap.

The Commerce Department has notified the ASMFC that it will impose a moratorium on Virginia’s menhaden harvest if the fishery is not in compliance by June 17, 2020. That time frame was chosen to give Virginia’s legislators time to bring state regulations into compliance and takes into consideration that the Bay harvest cap on [menhaden](#) has never been close to being reached by mid-June.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation Senior Regional Ecosystem Scientist Chris Moore issued the following statement.

“The Commerce Department should be applauded for confirming ASMFC’s decision finding Virginia’s menhaden fishery out of compliance. ASMFC has a history of successful management of fisheries up and down the Atlantic Coast. Governors from across the East Coast, regional fishery management councils, and thousands of members of the public all weighed in to support the ASMFC. It’s unfortunate that this action was necessary to ensure compliance with the menhaden fishery management plan.

“CBF looks forward to working with the Northam Administration and the General Assembly in order to get the Commonwealth back into compliance. In order to protect our environment, fisheries, and Virginia jobs, the General Assembly should transfer management of the menhaden fishery to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, which manages every other saltwater fishery in Virginia and can quickly bring the Commonwealth into compliance. VMRC’s sound, science-based work will ensure compliance so that fishing can resume in 2020.

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