



February 6, 2018

The Honorable Richard H. Stuart
Chairman, Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources
Pocahontas Building
900 E. Main St.
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Daniel W. Marshall III
Chairman, Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources
Pocahontas Building
900 E. Main St.
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Senator Stuart and Delegate Marshall:

Virginia's menhaden fishery provides hundreds of quality labor and non-labor jobs to Virginia, especially Virginia's Northern Neck, and it exports a significant amount of goods through the Port of Virginia. The science continues to show that the menhaden stock is healthy.

In November 2017, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) learned they could increase the coast-wide menhaden quota by 41% and not risk over-fishing. They opted to increase the coast-wide cap by only 8%.

However, the ASMFC re-allocated the number of menhaden each state could land, giving increased shares to states with little to no menhaden fishing activity. In doing so, they took from Virginia and allocated our share to states in New England and the southeast United States, reducing the Commonwealth's quota from 85% to 78%.

This plan unfairly takes from Virginia while increasing the total allowable catch on the Atlantic Coast by 16,000 metric tons. There is no reduction in the harvesting of menhaden.

We respectfully request that the legislature not enact HB 822 that would accept this re-allocation.

Should Virginia reject this, they will stand up for all fisheries managed by the ASMFC. Should Virginia accede to the ASMFC on this issue, in the future other states may team up on Virginia, take our allocation of other fish, and distribute it to other states.

There is recent precedent for this. In June 2017, New Jersey failed to accede to the ASMFC recommendations on summer flounder (fluke). When it was appealed to the US Secretary of Commerce, he chose not to institute a moratorium. Also, in January 2006, the Virginia General Assembly refused to enact ASMFC language related to the Chesapeake Bay, resulting in a more favorable outcome for Virginia in a subsequent negotiation including then-Governor Tim Kaine (VA) and Governor Bob Ehrlich (MD). Should Virginia choose not to adopt the ASMFC recommendations, we would hope that the state could negotiate for a better Virginia allocation with the ASMFC, preserving our rightful share of the menhaden landings.

Thank you for your consideration and we urge you to oppose HB 822.

Doris Crouse-Mays
President
Virginia AFL-CIO

Ryan Dunn
Executive Vice President of Corporate and Government Affairs
Virginia Chamber of Commerce

Brett Vassey
President & CEO
Virginia Manufacturers Association

Tommy Kellum
Director
Virginia Seafood Council

C. J. Hudgins
President
Virginia Watermen's Association

Mark Federici
President
United Food and Commercial Workers Local 400