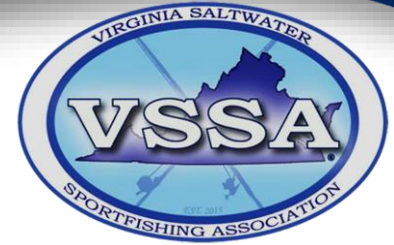


Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association, Inc (VSSA)

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Mr. John Bull
Commissioner VMRC
2600 Washington Ave.
Newport News, VA 23607

Dear John,

July 26, 2016

I am writing to express our views on matters likely to be discussed in the upcoming ASMFC Menhaden Meetings. Harvest specifications for the 2017 season will be set and, important guidance will be provided to the plan development team on the content of the Amendment 3 public information document. **VSSA is opposed to any increase in the total allowable catch (TAC) for menhaden for the following reasons:**

1. There is no new science or data since the 2015 assessment to justify an increase in the TAC.
2. The updated assessment is coming in 2017, which should be used for Amendment 3.
3. We should wait until we have new science to make an informed decision about quota or TAC increases.
3. The commission has committed to managing menhaden for the ecosystem. Any current increase in quota or TAC diminishes any conservation of the stock until Amendment 3. Increasing the current TAC may later be found to be excessive when the ecological reference points are in place.

Being realistic, we are cognizant there are serious issues relative to quota for the northern "bait states." Having said that, VSSA believes any and all quota increase for the northern "Bait States" should come from a quota reallocation from other states including Virginia. Or, in the worst case, an increase in the TAC of no more 5%, with the entire 5% increase being dedicated to the northern "bait states." **VSSA strongly opposes any increase in the TAC that would go to the Virginia reduction industry.**

Please feel free to contact me for additional discussion on these matters.

Respectfully,

John Bello

John Bello, Chairman

Cc: Rob O'Reilly and Menhaden Board, ASMFC