



Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association, Inc. (VSSA)
P.O. Box 28898, Henrico, VA 23228
<http://www.ifishva.org>
A Non-Profit 501-C3 Organization
Representing All Virginia Recreational Saltwater Anglers

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Senate Agriculture Chesapeake and Natural Resources Committee,
Post Office Box 406
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Committee Member,

January 13th, 2016

I am writing about **SB 219**, two very important bills you will soon be considering. The Virginia Saltwater Sportsman Association (VSSA) is a growing organization of recreational fisherman in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Our mission includes representing the interests of Virginia's recreational saltwater anglers, ensuring the long-term sustainability of Virginia's fisheries, while protecting Virginia's marine, boat, and tackle industry jobs.

Menhaden is the only saltwater fish in Virginia NOT regulated by the VMRC. Menhaden is the only fish with all regulations in the Virginia State Code. Fisheries Management should be left to scientists as opposed to politicians who generally know little about the scientific basis of fisheries management. Menhaden are not suitable for human consumption. They are forage in the marine food chain and are pivotal for many other species in the ecosystem.

Over fishing of menhaden has been a problem in the Chesapeake Bay and along the entire East Coast. The Virginia Tourism industry suffers because of the unsightly fishing techniques close to the shoreline. The industrial harvest of menhaden produces a large runoff of scales and slime as well as a smelly froth that is not only unsightly but unwelcome to tourist on the beach. Moreover, Virginia is the only east coast state that allows the industrial purse seine fishing for menhaden within its rivers and bays. The Chesapeake Bay is the nursery for much of the entire east coast, and it is extremely important to all Virginians. Last year there was 349,873,884 pounds of menhaden taken from our waters.

On behalf of all the anglers in Virginia, VSSA respectfully requests that you become personally involved to ensure the success of **SB 219** that would prohibit purse seine fishing for menhaden in certain Virginia waters. **SB 219** will not push the industrial menhaden harvest out of the bay, it will move them away from the shoreline.

If you have any questions or comments, the best way to contact us is through our website or email, ifishva@gmail.com

Sincerely,
Mike Avery, President