

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
PO Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

October , 2019

Dear Governor Northam:

I write to express deep concern regarding the current menhaden situation in the Chesapeake Bay.

Menhaden are being excessively harvested in the bay by the reduction industry, Omega Protein, a Canadian owned company. Omega recently exceeded the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) directed bay cap of 51,000 metric tons and continues their destructive netting with no regard for our bay's ecosystem or fishery management rules. Virginia is out of compliance, and thousands of anglers agree that menhaden depletion is occurring in the bay, the primary nursery for striped bass, menhaden and many other fish.

Menhaden, often called the "most important fish in the sea" are valuable filter feeders and critical forage for many fish species, birds, and mammals in the Chesapeake Bay. It's no coincidence we are also seeing a large decline in striped bass as menhaden have become scarcer. Striped bass are now considered "overfished" and this valuable fishery, worth over \$100 million per year in Virginia, is at risk.

Virginia needs better regulation of the menhaden reduction fishery in the bay. By exceeding the bay cap, Omega has once again demonstrated they cannot be trusted to do the right thing. In addition to excessive fishing in the bay, Omega has been cited for multiple violations of the Clean Water Act and more recently paid a large fee to the SEC to settle charges of misrepresentations on its loan agreements. During this past session of the General Assembly, Omega stated they were fishing the bay less often, but Bay anglers know better, and now Omega has stated they fished the bay frequently this summer because of "adverse ocean conditions." Thousands of bay anglers are outraged!

It is past time to have this industry regulated by fisheries managers at VMRC who capably oversee all other fish. We can no longer allow a foreign company to blatantly violate ASMFC directives, threaten the bay's fragile ecosystem, and cozy up to politicians who provide little "oversight" thru a part time General Assembly that has no expertise, time, or interest. We urge you to take immediate action to bring Virginia into compliance with ASMFC regulations and actively work to get real regulation through the VMRC.

Sincerely,

Name (print) _____

Address (print) _____

Cc: State Delegate _____

State Senator _____