



Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association
3419 Virginia Beach Blvd #5029
Virginia Beach, VA. 23452
Email: ifishva@gmail.com

Dear VSSA Members:

April 11, 2025

We continue to work for you and advocate for healthy saltwater fisheries in Virginia. Here is a quick update:

Board of

Directors

Mike Avery

Cobia—we were not able to sway VMRC on the recent changes to the cobia regs where there will now be a minimum size of 43 inches with the same catch limits as last year. We conducted a poll where many supported the new regulation and many did not. This change is driven by ASMFC and based on the fact that Virginia exceeded their share of the cobia catch in the past two years. It is estimated this change in size limits will reduce the overall harvest.

Bob Mandigo

Steve Atkinson

Menhaden—there will be a hearing at VMRC on April 22 at 9:30 to review another Petition for Rulemaking on menhaden. A link to the petition is here: [2024.12.18 VMRC - Menhaden - Petition for rulemaking](#).

John Bello

Scott Gregg

Even though the public comment period has ended, It would be very helpful if anglers would show up in support of this petition. Admittedly, given the composition of the current VMRC board it seems unlikely they will approve the petition, but it is always good to keep this issue alive and never give up. As you know we have been dealing with this for several years and believe we have made progress in raising awareness among those who care about the bay as well as legislators, regulators and the media. As always there will be an opportunity to speak at the commission meeting. VSSA will make comments focusing on the fact that the industry continues to claim there is “no science to support these concerns” while also lobbying the General Assembly to kill funding for a VIMS study of bay menhaden (which has never been done). For the third consecutive year the Canadian industry was able to kill this funding back in February while our Governor ignores the issue. We recently published an editorial about this in the Richmond paper titled: *Virginia’s “Canada First” Policy*. Finally, we have been closely watching an ASMFC work group created to address possible actions to curb the harvest of bay menhaden during the critical period of osprey reproduction. Research has shown that chicks are starving due to lack of menhaden. The group is supposed to report to the larger menhaden board later this spring, but it seems unlikely anything significant will be done in time to effect the menhaden reduction fishing season which starts in a few weeks.

David Tobey

Robert Pollard

Tom Burkett

Tom Fenn

Avery Thomas

Pat Valent

Lou Esposito

Striped Bass—this continues to be a challenge as they are still considered “overfished.” As a result, ASMFC is working on a draft addendum designed to consider further management actions for 2026 that will (hopefully) rebuild the stock by 2029. The Chesapeake Bay has experienced poor spawning success for several years which remains a huge concern for the future of this fishery. We will be watching this and advocating where needed.

As a reminder fully paid VSSA members now receive a 10% discount at Oceans East Tackle and Tacklecove.com. Just show your VSSA membership card.

We thank you for your continued support! Tight Lines!

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