

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2002

April 28, 2005

Mr. John V. O'Shea
Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1444 Eye Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. O'Shea:

We are writing to express our support for the recent action by the Menhaden Board to impose a cap on the harvest of menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay while additional studies are undertaken to determine the causes of the declining population of this important species.

We are deeply concerned by reports our offices have received from Maryland anglers and conservation organizations that menhaden stocks are persistently declining. As you know, menhaden are vital to the entire ecosystem of the Chesapeake Bay not only as forage for predatory fish but also as filter feeders, able to remove oxygen-depleting nutrients from the Bay. It is our understanding that the Board's decision to limit harvests to the average landings over the last five years beginning in 2006 and continuing in 2007 on the industrial menhaden harvest is supported by the State of Maryland, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the Coastal Conservation Association of Maryland, among other organizations. It will not only provide interim protection of the species, but begin a process for the long-term management of the fishery that will involve a public comment period to enable all interested parties to voice their concerns.

We hope that the Commission, at its May and August meetings, will sustain the Board's decision and take whatever additional long-term management measures necessary to protect and rejuvenate menhaden stocks in the Chesapeake Bay. Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated and we hope you will keep us apprised of your actions in this regard.

With best regards,

Sincerely,



Paul S. Sarbanes
United States Senator



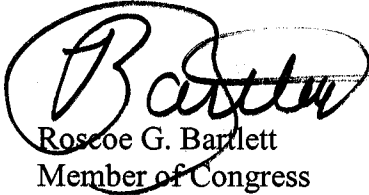
Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator



Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress



Benjamin L. Cardin
Member of Congress



Roscoe G. Bartlett
Member of Congress



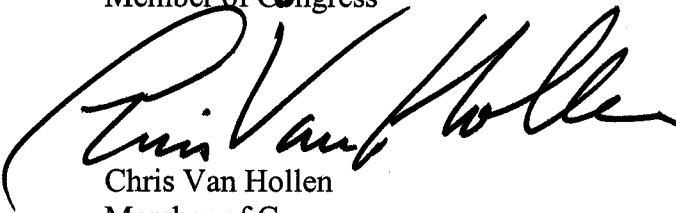
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