Overview

Last fall, ASMFC voted unanimously to find Virginia out of compliance with the menhaden management plan due to Virginia’s failure to implement the harvest cap in the Chesapeake Bay. Because the General Assembly retains management authority over menhaden and has not adopted the 51,000 mt Bay Cap, Omega Protein was able to exceed the cap and push Virginia out of compliance. House Bill 1448 (Plum) and Senate Bill 791 (Lewis) transfer authority for management of Atlantic menhaden from the General Assembly to VMRC. Transferring authority for this fishery would enable the VMRC to prevent a moratorium on fishing for Atlantic menhaden by setting a cap for 2020 at 36.1 metric tons to account for Omega’s overage in 2019. A moratorium would have severe consequences not only for Omega’s workers, but also for fisheries that catch and rely on menhaden for bait, like the blue crab fishery.