



The Watch

Capt. Dave Monti, Chairman



The RISAA Legislative Committee’s mission is to provide, in partnership with the Affiliated Clubs, a forum for improving the knowledge and understanding of fishery-related and government issues that affect recreational anglers. An informed membership encourages involvement and advocacy. The Legislative Committee will strive to advocate responsible fishery decision.

The Committee is comprised of RISAA Members and delegates from the Affiliated Clubs. The Committee meets two or three times a year, depending on the number of fishery and/or legislative issues that develop.

Commission overruled by Secretary of Commerce

Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce, notified the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) that he has found the State of New Jersey to be in compliance with the new Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan. The decision circumvents the work of the ASMFC that provides coastwide management of summer flounder (fluke) in our area.

Secretary Ross said in a letter to the ASMFC, “New Jersey makes a compelling argument that the measures it implemented this year, despite increasing catch above the harvest target, will likely reduce total summer flounder mortality in New Jersey waters to a level consistent with the overall conservation objective for the recreational fishery.”

This decision is the first time in 75 years that the Secretary of Commerce has not honored the scientific process of the ASMFC.

In a press release following the decision, the ASMFC said, “Based on the latest stock assessment information, summer flounder is currently experiencing overfishing. Spawning stock biomass has been declining since 2010 and is just 16% above the threshold. If the stock falls below the biomass threshold, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires the Council to initiate a rebuilding program, which could require more restrictive management measures.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act puts fish first in this nation to ensure that fish stocks are rebuilt. Having more than 40 fish stocks successfully rebuilt proves the fish first policy works.

When decisions – such as the Secretary of Commerce’s decision allowing New Jersey to make their own summer flounder regulations – are allowed, they put the interests of individual states first.

This is a recipe for disaster. States are subject to local political pressure to put local interests first, and the fish will take a back seat. The big concern with last month’s decision is that other states will decide to fish the way they want to regardless of what’s best for the fish, and we could end up with total chaos.

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How much Atlantic menhaden is enough?

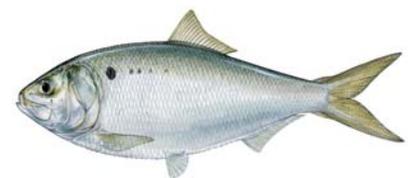
I serve on the Atlantic Menhaden Advisory Panel of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) that makes regulation recommendations on catch quotas for Atlantic menhaden (locally known as pogies).

The lines on how these fish should be utilized have been more sharply drawn today with a new amendment (visit www.asmfc.org for a copy) being developed for the Atlantic Menhaden Fisheries Management Plan.

In early August the ASMFC will vote on Amendment 3 that will be put out for public comment, and then on November 14th they will vote on

options within the Amendment that will guide the Plan in the future.

On one side of the issue is Omega Protein, a firm that catches and processes **over 80% of all the Atlantic menhaden**. Atlantic menhaden is used for the production of fish oil pills for humans, as well as an important ingredient for the production of dog and cat food, fertilizers and other uses. With the Atlantic menhaden stock on the rebound, due to the first ever catch quota put into place in 2012, those that represent the interests of fish processors want an enhanced Atlantic menhaden quota.



On the other side of the issue are conservations and fishermen who see the importance of Atlantic menhaden for environmental reasons.

They are an important forage fish for striped bass, bluefish, tuna and other species.

Menhaden also serve as roving filters, converting algae into energy and thus reducing nutrient load. A menhaden, through its unique filtering gills, is able to process up to 4 gallons of water per minute or a million gallons of water every 180 days. Multiply this by the number of menhaden and this is an amazing amount of water being filtered. Such a reduction of nutrients means fewer algae blooms and ultimately more oxygen for all fish. **(to page 32)**

