



## Maryland Charter Boat Association, Inc.

December 19, 2023

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
1050 N. Highland Street  
Suite 200 A-N  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Members of ASMFC,

The Maryland Charter Boat Association represents the 377 for-hire vessels, (small business owners) that participate in the Fishing Activity & Catch Tracking System (FACTS) electronic reporting system.

We are requesting Option C-2, which is crucial for our survival. Our passengers have expressed firmly over the past years that most would not book trips if we were reduced to 1 fish per person.

Page 9 of Addendum II clearly states, Chesapeake Bay for-hire removals decreased by 27% in 2022. Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR) has up-to-date catch and release data for the last three years on the charter boat / for-hire vessels.

We have seen our fishing season, which used to be 8 months long get reduced to 6 months and 3 weeks. Now Maryland Department of Natural Resources is looking to reduce our season by an additional 2-3 weeks. No one can make a living and provide for their family fishing 6 months of the year.

There has not been an Economic Impact Study completed to show the effects these decisions are having on the charter boat industry.

I would like to request that the Young of the Year Surveys in the Chesapeake Bay adapt to the environmental climate changes we had over the last few years.

Everyone is aware the migratory and spawning pattern of the female spawning stock have changed. The fish have settled into the middle to northern section of the Bay. Both the charter / for-hire, and recreational anglers have fished in this area going on 5 years because this holds the majority of the fish in the Bay.

The attached chart will show that there are no Young of Year Survey sites in this area. The current sampling sites used by MD DNR are proven to be overrun by blue catfish, an invasive species. It only makes sense that the Young of Year Survey numbers are declining in these areas.

However, over one third of the Chesapeake Bay where the female spawning stock migrates to remains unchecked. We see record numbers of juvenile fish, 14, 16 and 18 inches long, which are 1, 2 and 3 years old. This data will never show up in our current sampling sites.

The current Young of Year data being used is incomplete and does not reflect the true stock of the Bay. The for-hire industry has been accountable through electronic reporting and should not be reduced to 1 fish per angler or additional closures.

We respectfully ask for option C-2 to survive and remain in business to support our families.

Sincerely,

/s/ Brian L. Hardman

Captain Brian L. Hardman  
President, Maryland Charter Boat Association  
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