



Wes Moore, Governor  
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor  
Josh Kurtz, Secretary  
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

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March 10, 2026

**BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 755 - FIRST READER**

**SHORT TITLE: NATURAL RESOURCES - STRIPED BASS RECREATIONAL SEASONS AND FISHERIES REGULATIONS**

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: OPPOSE**

### **EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION**

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The Department opposes Senate Bill 755. The bill as written would put Maryland well outside of compliance with the Atlantic State Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Striped Bass Fisheries Management Plan goals and objectives for coastwide management. Due to the importance of Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake Bay in the life cycle of striped bass, and the potential impacts Maryland's fisheries have on the coastwide population of striped bass, it is likely that ASMFC would recommend a non-compliance finding to NOAA Fisheries and recommend a closure of our fisheries - both commercial and recreational. A closure of the entire striped bass fishery in Maryland would have a huge impact on the marine economy in Maryland and numerous small businesses would be severely affected.

The bill also adds additional requirements under the Maryland Administrative Procedures Act. The agency has a fifteen-day public scoping process, which was required by the 2006 JCR. That process begins with discussing possible regulatory changes with the agency's main fisheries advisory bodies, followed by the fifteen-day public comment opportunity online. During that fifteen-day public comment opportunity, the agency posts the required small business impact guidelines in addition to any other information that is believed to be helpful in aiding citizens in commenting. Then staff works on regulation drafting after comments are reviewed and a decision on a proposed regulation is made. This addition adds another layer of complexity to an already complex system for rulemaking on Maryland fisheries. Additionally, adding additional weeks onto the rule making process which currently takes, at minimum, four to five months, makes creating timely regulations to begin with the start of fishing seasons even more challenging if not impossible. Having different rules during the same fishing season causes confusion amongst those fishing, which can lead to noncompliance and enforcement difficulties.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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Striped bass are managed through the ASMFC, which is an interstate fishery management commission created by a compact that is incorporated into Maryland law under Natural Resources Article, Section 4-301. The ASMFC works through the Striped Bass Management Board to create and implement the goals and objectives of the Striped Bass Fisheries Management Plan. As a member

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of the ASMFC, Maryland participates in the drafting and implementation of the Fisheries Management Plan. A state cannot implement any less conservative regulations without prior review and approval from ASMFC.

Before any agency can implement a rules change in their jurisdiction that would affect the level of harvest in a fishery, proposed changes are reviewed for their compliance with the Fisheries Management Plan goals. This review includes the expected effectiveness of the proposal in reaching the goals of the plan. If a jurisdiction proceeds to implement rules that don't meet the established standards (in this case, the regulations proposed in SB755 would increase the level of striped bass harvest in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay), the ASMFC may recommend to NOAA Fisheries (U.S. Department of Commerce) that the jurisdiction be found out of compliance, which can result in a complete closure of that species' fisheries within the non-compliant jurisdiction.

#### **BILL EXPLANATION**

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The bill prohibits the agency from having a "catch-and-release" striped bass season and lays out an open striped bass recreational and charter boat season, including prescribing methods of catch and bait. The bill also requires the agency to submit an economic impact for any major impacts to interested stakeholders to AELR 15 days prior to submitting a regulation.