

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 889

(Delegate Jacobs, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Fisheries - Striped Bass or Rockfish - Juvenile Survey

This bill replaces a requirement that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conduct a specified annual survey to determine the relative abundance of striped bass or rockfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, with requirements that DNR (1) conduct specified scientific monitoring to determine the relative abundance of striped bass or rockfish in areas throughout the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries and (2) conduct specified sampling in the central region of the Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries and annually examine and report on the data collected. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2025, and the provisions requiring sampling in the central region of the Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries (and examining and reporting on the collected data) terminate June 30, 2027.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill can be implemented with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Survey Requirement Replaced

The bill replaces (with the required scientific monitoring and sampling described below) an existing requirement that DNR annually conduct a scientific survey to determine the

relative abundance of striped bass or rockfish of approximately 18 inches in length that are in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, which must be conducted in areas used by the department to determine its young-of-the-year index of striped bass or rockfish.

Scientific Monitoring to Determine the Relative Abundance of Striped Bass or Rockfish

The bill requires DNR – in accordance with existing law that requires the department to prepare fishery management plans for, among other species, striped bass or rockfish – to conduct scientific monitoring to collect biological information to determine the relative abundance of striped bass or rockfish in areas throughout the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries.

Sampling at Central Region Sites (Provisions That Terminate June 30, 2027)

Under provisions that terminate June 30, 2027, DNR must:

- conduct sampling using the same or equivalent methods as the young-of-the-year juvenile index survey of striped bass or rockfish in at least two sites located in the central region of the Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries; and
- locate the central region sampling sites in areas other than the areas sampled for the young-of-the-year juvenile index survey of striped bass or rockfish and in any of the following waters of the State: the Magothy River, the Severn River, the Chester River, the South River, the West River, Eastern Bay, the Miles River, the Patapsco River, the Rhode River, or the Tred Avon River.

DNR must annually examine the survey data collected from the central region sampling sites to ensure the distribution of striped bass or rockfish has not shifted from the established sites of the young-of-the-year juvenile index survey of striped bass or rockfish. By December 31 of each year, DNR must report the results from its examination of the survey data to the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission, the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission, the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment, and the House Environment and Transportation Committee.

Current Law:

Survey to Determine the Relative Abundance of Striped Bass or Rockfish

DNR must conduct annually a scientific survey to determine the relative abundance of striped bass or rockfish of approximately 18 inches in length that are in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The survey must be conducted in areas that are used by the department to determine its young-of-the-year index of striped bass or rockfish.

Fishery Management Plans

DNR is required by statute to prepare fishery management plans for various listed species and has specified authority to prepare plans for additional species. The plans contain a systematic description of a given fishery and the objectives and conservation and management measures for the fishery. Various requirements apply to both the plans and the conservation and management measures in the plans. Regardless of other statutory provisions under State fisheries law, once a fishery management plan has been adopted by regulation, the fishery must be harvested in accordance with the conservation and management measures in the plan and any regulations implementing or amending that plan.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 87 (Senator Bailey) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 30, 2025
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