



December 13, 2019

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross
Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Secretary Ross,

As you know, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) recently voted to find the Commonwealth of Virginia out of compliance with the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic menhaden. This action was the direct result of Omega Protein Corp. brazenly exceeding the Chesapeake Bay harvest quota by more than 35 million pounds. The vote was unanimous and as governors of the states that collectively made this recommendation to you through ASMFC, we urge you to uphold the integrity of this important body and its legitimate science-based management process by imposing a moratorium on this industrial menhaden reduction fishery in Virginia waters, as Virginia Governor Ralph Northam has already requested.

The science is clear that the Chesapeake Bay is a key feeding and nursery area for migratory species like striped bass, bluefish, seatrout, drum, and others that are recreationally and commercially important to states up and down the Atlantic coast. The science is also clear that Atlantic menhaden are a critical part of the diet of these fish species as well as seabirds, and marine mammals that live in the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean marine ecosystems. Limiting menhaden harvest in Virginia's portion of the Chesapeake Bay while ASMFC develops ecological reference points to guide future stock assessments and quota setting helps ensure that we minimize unintended consequences to all managed stocks and impacted ecosystems.

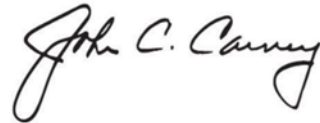
The coastal economies of our states depend on healthy ecosystems to support recreational and commercial fisheries that are worth tens of billions of dollars and responsible for hundreds of thousands of jobs according to NOAA's Fisheries Economics of the United States report.

Allowing any one company to jeopardize that balance is simply unacceptable. We urge you to bring Omega back in line with American fishery management standards by imposing a moratorium on their fishing operations in Virginia.

Sincerely,



Governor Ned Lamont
State of Connecticut



Governor John C. Carney
State of Delaware



Governor Janet T. Mills
State of Maine



Governor Larry Hogan
State of Maryland



Governor Charlie Baker
Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Governor Phil Murphy
State of New Jersey



Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
State of New York



Governor Gina M. Raimondo
State of Rhode Island



Governor Ralph S. Northam
Commonwealth of Virginia