Whether you are a concerned citizen who goes to the beach once a year or likes to eat striped bass in a restaurant or a dedicated fisherman or a bird watcher, the best testimony is a story about your personal or professional relationship to the ocean. Tell the commissioners why menhaden matter to *you*. And be sure to let them know the specific management measures you support. The following bullet points are to help you get started.

* I am here today to urge the commission to act immediately to restore Atlantic menhaden. We need more menhaden in the water.
* Menhaden have plummeted 90 percent over the past 25 years and remain at an all-time low – less than 10% of what they were originally.[[1]](#footnote-1) The continued high rate of menhaden fishing is likely to have disastrous consequences on the coastal environment.
* Atlantic menhaden play an important role in the Atlantic Coast ecosystem as a critical food source for marine wildlife, such as marine mammals and birds that we enjoy observing, and for fish that we like to eat, such as striped bass and bluefish.
* These little fish have a big, broad impact on our state’s economy. Thousands of businesses rely on the predatory fish and marine animals that depend on menhaden as a staple food. Saltwater fishing, whale watching and bird watching generate hundreds of millions of dollars per year on the East Coast.
* The fish I catch depend on menhaden as an important, high energy food source. We need to ensure there are enough menhaden left in the water to support healthy populations of sport fish like striped bass and bluefish and tuna.
* Atlantic menhaden are more than just a commercial resource. Scientists have warned that having too few menhaden in the water could have serious and far-reaching consequences on the fish and wildlife that eat them and the ocean ecosystem as a whole.
* Recent science points to the benefits of leaving more forage fish like menhaden in the ocean to sustain predators and maintain the health of marine ecosystems. A new study shows that forage fish are worth twice as much in the water as food for commercially important fish than when they are caught.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* The public has clearly shown a high interest in the status of menhaden. Last year you received more than 90 thousand comments urging strong protections.

To ensure we have a healthy marine environment and coastal economy the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission needs to transition the menhaden fishery into the modern age of fishing limits, monitoring and accountability.

 Specifically, I ask you to support the following:

1. **Implementation of a coast-wide annual catch limit** (Section 4.2.1 Option B), beginning in 2013, which will close fishing for menhaden when the quota is reached.
2. **A menhaden harvest reduction of 50 percent from recent catch** (Section 4.2.1.2 Sub-Option B.5). This is necessary to end overfishing immediately and achieve the commission’s goal of restoring this depleted forage fish in a timely fashion.
3. **Immediate action to rebuild the menhaden resource** – Status quo and waiting 10 years is unacceptable. I support Section 2.6.2 Option C – to rebuild menhaden to the new management target within five years.
4. **Adoption of new spawning biomass reference points** – The Board must adopt a new overfished definition for menhaden, consistent with the decisions made last November, in order to substantially increase the spawning population and provide more food for predators (Section 2.5 Option B).
1. Public Information Document for Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden, February 2012: 8% of the maximum spawning potential, page 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pikitch, E et al (2012). Little Fish, Big Impact: Managing a Crucial Link in Ocean Food Webs. Lenfest Ocean Program. Washington, DC. 108 pp. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)