

JEREMY STINE
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 27



SENATE
STATE OF LOUISIANA

COMMITTEES
Insurance
Judiciary A
Labor and Industrial
Relations

September 22, 2023

Mr. Andrew Blanchard, Chairman
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission
P.O. Box 98000
2000 Quail Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70898

Chairman Blanchard,

I am writing to urge you to do more to protect our coast from the impacts of the commercial menhaden reduction industry.

During the week of September 11-15, our coastal areas were impacted by three separate menhaden net spills or tears, caused by Omega Protein and Daybrook Fisheries. Our area beaches like Holly Beach and Rutherford Beach were covered with rotting carcasses of menhaden and other bycatch. That bycatch included many large redfish, which as we understand, are experiencing challenges across our coast, to the point where recreational limits are being lowered.

Unfortunately, it seems that these are not rare or isolated incidents. Our area beaches have been covered with dead fish multiple times per summer after menhaden boats have been in the area fishing near the beaches. The net tears from last week come almost exactly one year after an entire net containing roughly 500,000 pounds of menhaden was cut by Omega Protein near Holly Beach, causing an enormous fish kill and a dangerous hazard. In July, a Daybrook Fisheries vessel was cited for illegally harvesting 86,000 pounds of menhaden from restricted waters. In both of these cases, the offending companies made public apologies, ensuring us that these incidents were rare, and were the result of poor decisions by their ship captains. Yet, here we are again faced with more ecological damage and more concerned, frustrated constituents.

I urge you to take action to ensure that our beaches and fisheries are protected from future incidents like this. Extend the menhaden harvest buffer zone to one mile. At one mile, there is plenty of room for the commercial menhaden fishery to operate safely and effectively off the coast

with fewer impacts to our shorelines and our fisheries like the ones referenced above. Allowing them to fish 1/4 mile off the beach, often in water less than 8 feet deep is not working.

Thank you for your efforts to protect our fisheries and our shoreline habitats.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy Stine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jeremy Stine
State Senator