April 10, 2019

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Executive Chamber
Capitol Building
Albany, N.Y. 12224

RE: S.2317 (Kaminsky)/A.2571 (Menhaden)

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter urges you to sign into law S.2317/A.2571, an act to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to the taking of menhaden.

This legislation would prohibit the taking of menhaden by use of a purse seine. Menhaden (also known as “bunker”) are a small schooling fish that have been traditionally harvested for fertilizer, bait, fish oil and pet food, but deserves special attention and protection because so many other species, like bluefish, dolphins, eagles, humpback whales, osprey, sharks, striped bass and weakfish, depend on them for food.

In 2012, menhaden populations were plummeting after decades of overfishing. As a result, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission imposed meaningful restrictions on harvests of this valuable fish species. Because of these protective policies, menhaden populations are now on the rebound and we are seeing a ripple effect to this recovery as more marine mammals and sport fish species are entering New York waters to pursue this food source.

Current New York fisheries permits allow for the harvest of menhaden using large nets called “purse seines” that have the capacity to catch hundreds of thousands of menhaden and the marine animals that pursue them in a single set. S.2317/A.2571 will ban the use of this technique so as not to set back the recovery of this keystone species and repeat the same overfishing mistakes of the past. Preserving strong populations of menhaden will in turn lead to a healthier sport fishery and ocean ecosystem.

The Sierra Club urges you to sign S.2317/A.2571 into law. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Roger Downs
Conservation Director
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter