NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System
First Landing Buoy
Spring Seasonal Information

Welcome to NOAA's First Landing CBIBS Buoy, located in the Chesapeake's mouth, approximately halfway between the junction of the Thimble Shoals and Baltimore Channels and the middle section of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel.

When spring comes, it brings crabs crawling out of their wintertime beds on the bottom. Many of them are sooks (mature females) who bred with jimmys (males) last fall before migrating to the lower Bay. Their fertilized eggs, which require high salinity to develop, will grow into large masses under the sooks' abdominal aprons during spring, leading watermen to refer to them as "sponge crabs." These crabs will feed on oyster reefs and other "live bottom" as their eggs develop, before beginning to spawn as spring turns to summer.

Meanwhile, spring-spawning mature rockfish and American shad have entered the Chesapeake from the Atlantic. These two species are examples of *anadromous* fish, which live in the ocean but head up the Bay's big rivers to spawn in the spring near the fall lines (that is, the rivers' heads of navigation). This group includes alewife herring, hickory shad, rockfish, blueback herring, and American shad.

Menhaden too are moving up the Bay, but most of them are immature one- and two-year-olds that will spend the summer grazing through the Chesapeake's plankton communities and, in turn, feeding predators like rockfish.

Other fish that also spent the winter on the Atlantic's continental shelf begin to move back into the Bay. They include Atlantic croakers, flounder, Norfolk spot, and bluefish. Fish that winter in the North Carolina sounds also move past here and into the Chesapeake, including speckled trout and red drum. In June, cobia and cownose rays arrive from points further south.