

NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System
Potomac River Buoy
Spring Seasonal Information

Welcome to NOAA's Potomac CBIBS Buoy, located just southwest of Point Lookout, the Maryland side of the river's mouth.

At Point Lookout, the powerful freshwater currents of the largest river on the Atlantic coast (the Susquehanna) meet those of the eighth largest (the Potomac) and continue their flow to the ocean. Their fresh waters mix, of course, with salt water that flood tides push into the Chesapeake from the ocean. For fish like American shad and rockfish (also known as striped bass), the declining salinity that they find as they travel upstream encourages them to swim further toward their ancestral spawning grounds way up the Susquehanna (for shad), near the Susquehanna Flats (for rockfish), and just below Great Falls (for both shad and rock) on the Potomac.

These fish bring anglers, but they attract other fishers too, especially feathered ones. In spring, look for gannets—powerful, large, white power-diving sea birds with black wing tips—and loons—the champion underwater swimmers with long, powerful legs and big webbed feet that help them chase bait as effectively as rockfish do.

As to rockfish, there are plenty of these big fish swimming past here to the head of the Bay, which is the largest spawning ground for the species on the Atlantic coast. Others turn left inside the Potomac CBIBS buoy to travel up the Potomac, whose upper reaches are the third largest spawning area on the East Coast (after the top of the Chesapeake Bay and the Hudson River). There are plenty of anglers looking for them, too, either using electronic fishfinders or following diving gannets that signal menhaden and herring on which the rockfish also feed.