

NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System

First Landing Buoy: Summer Seasonal

NOAA's First Landing CBIBS buoy sees a lot of traffic in summer. Situated where the Chesapeake meets the Atlantic, it marks a critical junction between ocean and estuary. Young fish like spot and menhaden, newly spawned on the continental shelf, get carried into and up the Chesapeake by the deep salt wedge flowing in from the Atlantic. So do baby blue crabs that were born in the lower Bay and swept into the Atlantic in the out-flowing surface waters to develop through several larval stages before sinking and being swept back in.

This buoy marks yet another transition, between southern- and mid-Atlantic waters. A number of fish that winter from North Carolina to the Caribbean migrate north to feed through the summer in the Chesapeake's rich waters. Examples include red drum, black drum, speckled trout, cobia, bluefish, Spanish mackerel, spadefish, cow-nosed rays, clear-nosed skates, and even a few tarpon. Many will migrate up the Chesapeake, but quite a few will stay within ten miles of the First Landing Buoy, feeding in the eddies around the pilings of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel and the complex reef communities that have grown up on the rocks of its islands and tunnel tubes.

The interplay of Chesapeake and Atlantic waters varies from year to year, month to month, and day to day. That interaction dictates both macro-habitats, such as the salinity and dissolved oxygen here, and micro-habitats, such as the strength of the eddies around the Bridge-Tunnel islands. If you'd like to see good graphic representations of the water quality features around the First Landing Buoy throughout the summer and the way they affect each other, you can visit www.buoybay.noaa.gov and create your own graphs. This is a great feature for anyone who wants to understand how the Bay and its rivers "work."