

NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System York Spit Buoy: Summer Seasonal Information

Welcome to NOAA's York Spit CBIBS Buoy, located on the shoal extending under water from the North side of the York River's channel, an area that Capt. Smith passed at least nine times during his travels around the Chesapeake.

Summer conditions at the York Spit buoy reflect the interplay between rainfall in the York River's Central Virginia watershed, the flow of water down the Chesapeake's mainstem, and the tides' push of Atlantic salt water up the Bay. If you'd like to view good graphic representations of the lower York's water-quality features over time, and the ways 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."

At the height of summer, young croakers, spot, menhaden, silversides, and bay anchovies spread out around the edges of the Guinea Marsh to the North, the Goodwin Islands in the West, and the Big Salt Marsh at Poquoson to the Southwest, as well as on nearby restored oyster reefs. A modest rebound of underwater grasses on adjoining shoals may give them good habitat and hiding places, though some of them will become food for larger fish, especially rockfish, speckled trout, adult croakers, and flounder.

Fast-swimming bluefish and Spanish mackerel are already chasing anchovies and "peanut" (or baby) menhaden in the open waters outside the buoy. Meanwhile, the little fish have to avoid predators from above, especially terns, laughing gulls, and herring gulls, while ospreys, great blue herons, and fast-swimming furry fishermen like river otters will chase them in the shallows.

Somehow, though, even with all of these predators, the nursery waters around York Spit should produce enough juvenile fish this summer to help swell the stock of each species over the coming fall and winter.