



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 114

Natural Resources – Nuisance Organisms – Pilot Projects and Northern Snakeheads

DATE: MARCH 17, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

POSITION

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation supports Senate Bill 114 and recommends a favorable report from the Environment and Transportation Committee. SB114 would allow the Department of Natural Resources to develop pilot programs for the control and management of aquatic invasive species and would expand the gear types allowed for the harvest of northern snakeheads.

COMMENTS

Invasive or “nuisance” species are a significant threat to aquatic ecosystems worldwide. Nearly half of the 958 threatened or endangered species in the United States are at risk due to interactions with invasive species¹ and damages caused by invasive species cost on the order of billions of dollars per year.² In the Chesapeake Bay, northern snakeheads, which are native to Asia, were introduced intentionally through the live release of individuals into the ecosystem. Since their introduction, northern snakeheads have become established in over 60 miles of the Potomac River and their range continues to expand throughout the Bay.

Northern snakeheads are generalist predators, preying on juvenile fishes, crayfish, insect larvae, frogs, and other native species. Their rapid growth rate and high reproduction allows them to outcompete native fish species. It is estimated that at the current expansion rate, snakeheads will be found throughout the Chesapeake Bay within the next half-century.

This bill would add hook and line to the allowable methods for catching northern snakeheads, expanding opportunities to remove this damaging predator from the ecosystem. Additionally, this legislation would allow for the establishment of pilot programs to test control and management strategies for other aquatic invasive species.

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation recommends a favorable report on SB114 from the Environment and Transportation Committee. Please contact Dr. Allison Colden, Fisheries Scientist (acolden@cbf.org) should you require any additional information.

¹ Wilcove, D.S., D. Rothstein, J. Dubow, A. Phillips, and E. Losos. 1998. “Quantifying Threats to Imperiled Species in the United States,” *BioScience*, 48: 607-615.

² Pimentel, D., L. Lach, R. Zuniga, and D. Morrison. 2000. “Environmental and Economic Costs of Nonindigenous Species in the United States.” *Bioscience*, 50(1): 53-56.

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