



POSITION STATEMENT

SB 0207 – Natural Resources – Northern Snakehead – Common Name

January 22, 2024

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), a division of the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland (TCCSMD) is in support of SB 0207 – Natural Resources – Northern Snakehead – Common Name, entered by Senator Bailey. As SMADC's mission is to increase the overall economic viability of local producers, we find this bill to be important to the success of local fisherman, and to the local waterways.

The proposed change is intended to address the challenges created by the presence of the invasive snakehead fish in Maryland's waterways. Scientists, environmentalists, fishermen and watermen are all in strong agreement that the invasive fish is wreaking havoc on the ecosystem of the local waterways and needs to be removed as much as possible. One way of ensuring that removal is to make the fish, which has a delicious white flaky meat that is enjoyable to eat, more appealing to consumers. Therefore, this bill seeks to encourage consumer consumption of the snakehead by giving it a new name that will look delectable on local menus. Using a more enticing name, chefs, restaurants, and stores could better advertise and promote the product.

Numerous discussions with stakeholders who currently work to increase the consumption of snakehead make it clear that these efforts suffer from one major problem - the snakehead has a limited market of potential consumers because of its unappetizing name. For this reason, Senate Bill 207 would rename the snakehead fish to the "Patuxent fish" to emphasize the importance of preserving the natural heritage of our Patuxent River, its tributaries, and the counties it touches, including Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's. By linking the invasive species to this important waterway, we can work to protect and conserve our native ecosystems, while also providing Marylanders with a renewed opportunity to enjoy a fish with a much more common and desirable name.

Altering the common name of a fish has become a proven and successful way to encourage their harvest and consumption. Renaming the snakehead to make it more marketable would have substantial benefits for our watermen, our economy, and our ecosystem.

We ask that you support SB 0207.

Thank You,
Shelby Watson-Hampton
SMADC Director

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