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Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Motor Vehicles and Transportation

Natural Resources, Agriculture,
and Open Space

Joint Committee on Administrative,
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB1232-Fisheries-Striped Bass or Rockfish-Juvenile Survey

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Today I am here to present HB1232 which expands the scope of the annual young of the year juvenile survey of striped bass by adding more sites in the mid bay region of the Chesapeake Bay.

Currently the Department of Natural Resources conducts samplings in 4 areas of the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries consisting of the Upper Bay Region, the Potomac River, the Nanticoke River and the Choptank River. These areas are located basically in the north and the south regions of the bay. The total number of sites surveyed in these 4 areas is 22. This young of the year sampling has been done in these areas since 1954.

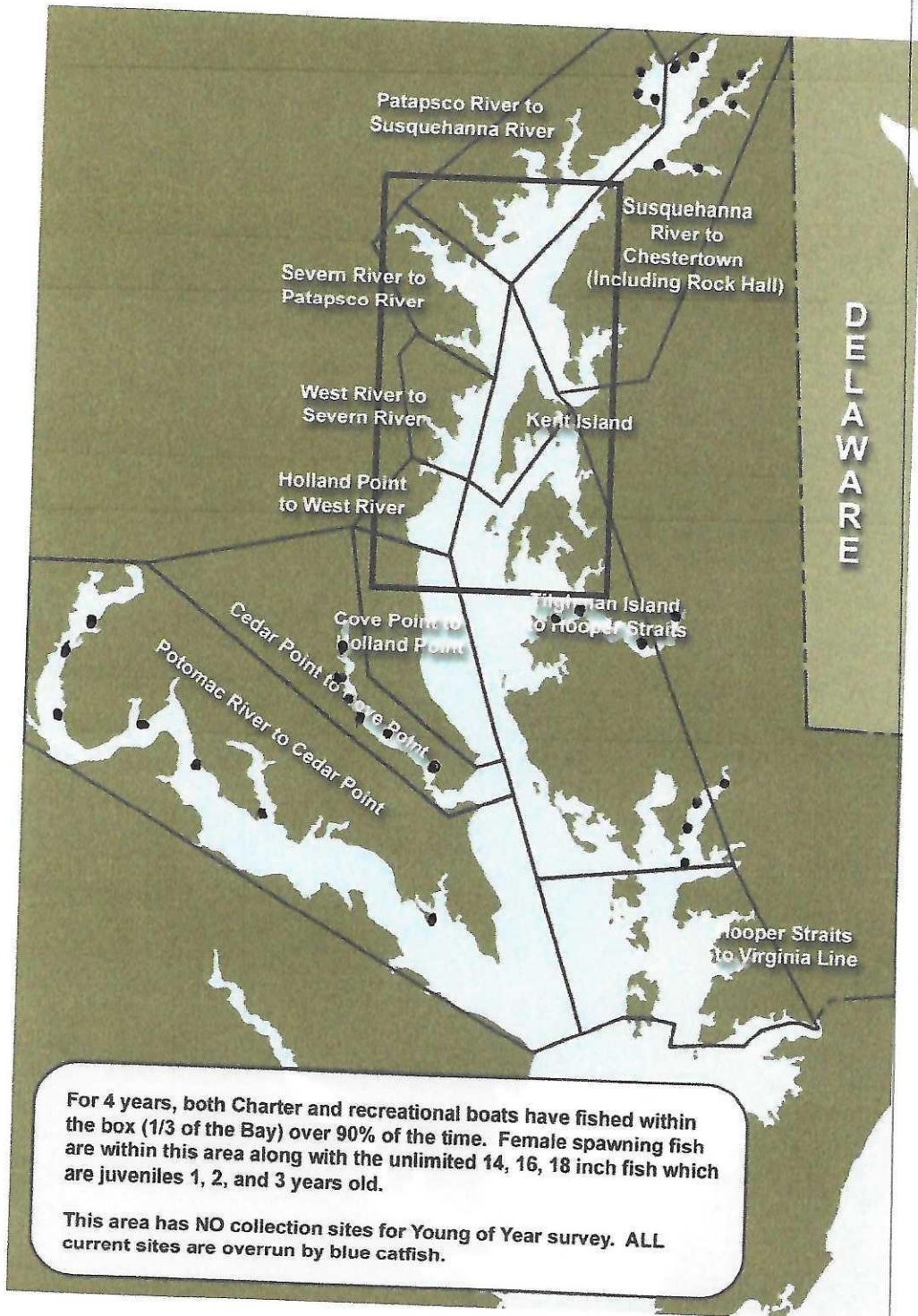
The sampling is done on a monthly basis in July, August, and September in these 4 areas. As you can notice by the chart provided in my testimony, there is no sampling done in any of the mid bay region, or in the Magothy, Severn, Chester, South, West, and Miles rivers, or the Eastern Bay. I know that spawning does take place in many of these areas because I have witnessed it myself.

This legislation seeks to expand sampling sites in the above-mentioned areas from 12 to 20 additional sites. We all want good and accurate science when making proper conservation decisions. For the last several years, an estimated 90% of the biomass including female spawning fish along with the unlimited 14, 16, 18 inch fish which are juveniles 1, 2, and 3 years old have stayed in the mid bay area. We know that because that is where the majority of recreational and charter boats have fished consistently.

Due to climate change, a lack of sav's, the shifting of bottom areas from silting and pollution from harmful nutrients entering from the Conowingo Dam's reservoir, in addition to the massive number of the invasive and predatory blue catfish and snake head, the normal pattern of the juvenile rockfish has undoubtedly been changed.

By adding these additional sites to the historic 4 river locations that have been an area of sampling for 70 years, the Department of Natural Resources will have a more complete understanding of the bay wide juvenile numbers which will be a much more comprehensive understanding of the juvenile indices.

I ask for your favorable vote for HB1232



For 4 years, both Charter and recreational boats have fished within the box (1/3 of the Bay) over 90% of the time. Female spawning fish are within this area along with the unlimited 14, 16, 18 inch fish which are juveniles 1, 2, and 3 years old.

This area has NO collection sites for Young of Year survey. ALL current sites are overrun by blue catfish.