

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 87 (Chairman, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee)
(Departmental – Natural Resources)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environmental Matters

Natural Resources - Fisheries Management Plans - Catfish

This departmental bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to prepare a fishery management plan for catfish.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements could be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: DNR has determined that this bill will have minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment.

Analysis

Current Law: DNR is required to prepare a fishery management plan for 23 species of fish, including: (1) striped bass or rockfish; (2) white perch; (3) yellow perch; (4) American shad; (5) hickory shad; (6) oysters; (7) blue crabs; (8) bluefish; (9) herring; (10) weakfish; (11) croaker; (12) spot; (13) summer flounder; (14) American eel; (15) red drum; (16) black drum; (17) spotted sea trout; (18) horseshoe crabs; (19) menhaden; (20) tautog; (21) black sea bass; (22) scup; and (23) hard shell clams.

Background: According to DNR, the population of catfish in the northern Chesapeake Bay has declined 70% since its peak in 1989. Maryland's harvest of catfish in the Chesapeake Bay has declined 37% from 1998 to 2000. Juvenile indices, a measure of reproductive success, have also declined. DNR advises that a fishery management plan is

needed to establish conservation measures and optional fishing strategies to rebuild the catfish stocks.

DNR advises that catfish are important to both recreational and commercial anglers. Based on data from 2000, the commercial harvest of catfish ranked fourth (behind menhaden, striped bass, and white perch) in pounds and value of all finfish species in the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. The primary market for catfish is for live fish to be transported to lakes and ponds where anglers pay a fee to catch the catfish. DNR also reports that catfish are an important food for human consumption in the Chesapeake Bay region and southern states.

A fishery management plan is required to include the best available estimates of sustainable harvest rates, indicators that would trigger any tightening or loosening of harvest restrictions, a description of the fishery, and other pertinent data to assist the Secretary of Natural Resources in determining conservation and management measures reasonably necessary to ensure that the fishery resources will be sustained. The Secretary is required to adopt the proposed management plans and any proposed conservation and management measure by regulation. Under current law, once a fishery management plan is adopted, the State's fishery resources are required to be harvested in accordance with the conservation and management measures in the fishery management plan and any regulations implementing or amending that plan. According to DNR, fishery management plans have been completed for 19 species.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SB 688/HB 1101 of 1996 would have added catfish, as well as other species, to the list of required fishery management plans. SB 688 received an unfavorable report by the House Environmental Matters Committee. HB 1101 passed the Senate with amendments, but no further action was taken.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Department of Legislative Services

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