

HB0446/523823/1

BY: Environment and Transportation Committee

AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 446
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, at the top of the page, insert “EMERGENCY BILL”; in the sponsor line, strike “**and Ziegler**” and substitute “**Ziegler, Behler, Boyce, J. Long, and Ruth**”; strike lines 2 and 3 in their entirety and substitute “**Natural Resources – Invasive Blue Catfish Pilot Program**”; strike beginning with “prohibiting” in line 4 down through “license” in line 7 and substitute “establishing the Invasive Blue Catfish Pilot Program to curb the spread of the invasive blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries; and generally relating to the establishment of the Invasive Blue Catfish Pilot Program”; strike in their entirety lines 8 through 12, inclusive; and in line 14, strike “the Laws of Maryland read as follows”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On pages 1 and 2, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with line 15 on page 1 through line 15 on page 2, inclusive, and substitute:

“(a) The Department of Natural Resources, in coordination with the Invasive Catfish Advisory Committee, shall establish the Invasive Blue Catfish Pilot Program.

(b) The purpose of the Pilot Program is to curb the spread of the invasive blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

(c) The Pilot Program consists of:

(1) the For–Hire/Commercial Blue Catfish Program;

(2) the Mid– and Lower–Bay Blue Catfish Trotline Program; and

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(3) any other program that the Department determines to be effective in curbing the spread of blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

(d) (1) Under the For-Hire/Commercial Blue Catfish Program, the Department may:

(i) authorize eligible participants to run for-hire and commercial fishing trips simultaneously; and

(ii) make any regulatory or administrative changes it believes will increase the commercial harvest of blue catfish.

(2) (i) Under the Mid- and Lower-Bay Blue Catfish Trotline Program, the Department shall authorize the use of finfish trotlines south of the William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial Bridge to the maximum extent feasible to harvest blue catfish.

(ii) The Department may restrict the areas south of the William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial Bridge where finfish trotlines may be used to harvest blue catfish based on potential bycatch, user conflicts, or other issues it considers relevant.

(e) In implementing the Pilot Program, the Department shall consider for the harvest of blue catfish:

(1) authorizing the use of electrofishing;

(2) authorizing the use of finfish trotlines of up to 2,400 feet in length;

(3) eliminating any limits on the number of hooks used on a finfish trotline; and

(4) authorizing the use of hooks that are not corrodible.

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(f) The Department shall:

(1) expand the use of practices determined to be effective under the Pilot Program throughout the duration of the Pilot Program; and

(2) continue to implement and update the Pilot Program until the termination date of this Act.

(g) On or before December 1, 2025, the Department shall report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly on its findings and recommendations under the Pilot Program.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety, has been passed by a ye and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from the date it is enacted. It shall remain effective through June 30, 2026, and, at the end of June 30, 2026, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.”.