

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

House Bill 446 (Delegate T. Morgan, *et al.*)  
Environment and Transportation

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Commercial Blue and Flathead Catfish Finfish Trotline License - Prohibited  
Regulations

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This bill establishes that regulations adopted by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to govern commercial blue and flathead catfish finfish trotline licenses may not prohibit a licensee from fishing in the main stem of the Chesapeake Bay that is south of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill does not directly affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal overall, but potential meaningful impact on some small businesses, as discussed below.

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Analysis

**Current Law:**

*Commercial Blue and Flathead Catfish Finfish Trotline License*

A commercial blue and flathead catfish finfish trotline license authorizes the holder to catch for sale blue and flathead catfish in the tidal waters of the State using a finfish trotline, as defined in DNR regulations. An applicant does not need to hold a tidal fish license (DNR's primary commercial fishing license) to be eligible for the license. A licensee must fish in accordance with DNR regulations.

*Regulations Governing the Use of Finfish Trotline Gear by Commercial Licensees*

DNR regulations governing the use of finfish trotline gear by commercial licensees (not specific to commercial blue and flathead catfish finfish trotline licensees), under COMAR [08.02.25.06F](#), establish that finfish trotlines may not be set in the Chesapeake Bay south of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, including Pocomoke Sound and Tangier Sound.

**Small Business Effect:** DNR indicates that the blue catfish population is predominantly found in tidal rivers and north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, where finfish trotlines are currently allowed; however, allowing commercial blue and flathead catfish finfish trotline licensees to also fish in the main stem of the bay south of the bridge may meaningfully affect some of those licensees. DNR indicates that it has issued 214 commercial blue and flathead catfish finfish trotline licenses.

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**Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** SB 186 (Senator Bailey) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 31, 2025  
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