

# SENATE BILL 610

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EMERGENCY BILL

6lr3358  
CF HB 947

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By: **Senator Mautz**

Introduced and read first time: February 5, 2026

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

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Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 5, 2026

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## CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

2 ~~Department of Natural Resources – Commercial Invasive Blue and Flathead~~  
3 ~~Catfish Finfish Trotline License Pilot Program – Alterations~~

4 FOR the purpose of altering the ~~commercial blue and flathead catfish finfish trotline license~~  
5 ~~to allow a person to catch blue catfish with certain gear~~ Invasive Blue Catfish Pilot  
6 Program to include the Blue Catfish Gill Net Program; and generally relating to the  
7 ~~commercial blue and flathead catfish finfish trotline license~~ Invasive Blue Catfish  
8 Pilot Program.

9 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
10 ~~Article – Natural Resources~~ Chapter 171 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2025  
11 ~~Section 4-701.2~~  
12 ~~Annotated Code of Maryland~~  
13 ~~(2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)~~

14 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
15 Chapter 172 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2025

16 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
17 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

18 Chapter 171 of the Acts of 2025

19 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
20 That:

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



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

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

5           (c) The Pilot Program consists of:

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

7               (2) the Mid- and Lower-Bay Blue Catfish Trotline Program; [and]

8               (3) **THE BLUE CATFISH GILL NET PROGRAM; AND**

9               ~~(3)~~ (4) any other program that the Department determines to be  
10 effective in curbing the spread of blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

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

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

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

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

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

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

25               (1) authorizing the use of electrofishing;

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

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

28 and

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

1 (f) The Department shall:

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

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

6 (g) On or before December 1, [2025] 2026, AND EACH DECEMBER 1  
7 THEREAFTER, the Department shall report to the [Governor] SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
8 EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT and THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT  
9 AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State  
10 Government Article, [the General Assembly] on [its] THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PILOT  
11 PROGRAM DURING THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING YEAR, INCLUDING findings and  
12 recommendations under the Pilot Program.

13 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency  
14 measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety, has  
15 been passed by a ye and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members elected to  
16 each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from the date it is  
17 enacted. It shall remain effective through June 30, [2026] 2030, and, at the end of June  
18 30, [2026] 2030, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall  
19 be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

20 **Chapter 172 of the Acts of 2025**

21 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

22 That:

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

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

27 (c) The Pilot Program consists of:

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

29 (2) the Mid- and Lower-Bay Blue Catfish Trotline Program; [and]

30 (3) **THE BLUE CATFISH GILL NET PROGRAM; AND**

31 **[(3)] (4) any other program that the Department determines to be**  
32 **effective in curbing the spread of blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

15                      (1)   authorizing the use of electrofishing;

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

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

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

20           (f)   The Department shall:

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

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

25           (g)   On or before December 1, [2025] 2026, AND EACH DECEMBER 1  
26 THEREAFTER, the Department shall report to the [Governor] SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
27 EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT and THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT  
28 AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State  
29 Government Article, [the General Assembly] on [its] THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PILOT  
30 PROGRAM DURING THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING YEAR, INCLUDING findings and  
31 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]~~ **2030**, and, at the end of June 30, ~~[2026]~~ **2030**, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

~~Article Natural Resources~~

~~4-701.2.~~

(a) ~~There is a commercial blue and flathead catfish [finfish trotline] license.~~

(b) (1) ~~The license authorizes the holder to catch for sale [blue and flathead] IN THE TIDAL WATERS OF THE STATE:~~

(i) ~~BLUE CATFISH USING, AS DEFINED IN DEPARTMENT REGULATIONS:~~

~~1. A FINFISH TROTLINE; OR~~

~~2. A GILL NET WITH A MESH SIZE OF NOT MORE THAN 7 INCHES; AND~~

(ii) ~~FLATHEAD catfish [in the tidal waters of the State] using a finfish trotline, as defined in Department regulations.~~

(2) ~~A licensee shall fish in accordance with Department regulations.~~

(c) ~~A person who wishes to obtain the license shall complete and submit an application for the license to the Department or any person designated by the Department.~~

(d) ~~An applicant for the license does not need to hold a tidal fish license under § 4-701 of this subtitle to be eligible for the license.~~

(e) ~~The term of the license is 1 year from September 1 through August 31 the following year.~~

(f) ~~The annual license fee is \$15.~~

(g) ~~A licensee may not transfer a license issued under this section.~~

(h) ~~A licensee shall have a commercial blue and flathead catfish [finfish trotline] license in the licensee's possession when the licensee fishes under the license.~~

1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency  
2 measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety, has  
3 been passed by a yea and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members elected to  
4 each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from the date it is  
5 enacted.

Approved:

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Governor.

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President of the Senate.

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Speaker of the House of Delegates.