



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Charles Glass, Deputy Secretary

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 114 - Natural Resources – Nuisance Organisms – Pilot Projects and Northern Snakeheads

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources supports its legislation, Senate Bill 114, and respectfully asks the committee for a favorable report.

First and foremost, the department uses pilot programs as an adaptive management tool under fishery management plans. These programs have proven to be very effective as management tools and the department would like to use them to control aquatic nuisance species. Currently, the law does not allow the department to conduct pilot programs on listed aquatic invasive species. This legislation changes that, and would allow the state the flexibility it needs to tackle detrimental creatures like blue catfish and northern snakeheads.

The northern snakehead is an invasive species that was found in Potomac River of Chesapeake Bay in 2004 and has since spread throughout the tidal basin. Legislation enacted in 2016 enabled the general public to use bow and arrow to commercially harvest snakeheads. Since then, snakeheads have rapidly colonized rivers with naturally more turbid water (e.g., eastern shore rivers), which makes it difficult for bow and arrow to be effective as a tool of harvest. In addition to pilot program authority, this bill seeks to modernize current legislation by expanding the authorized commercial gear to include hook-and-line, which is also widely used to harvest snakeheads. Doing so will further incentivize the general public to harvest snakeheads, which lowers biomass of the species and benefits Bay ecology.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources respectfully requests the committee to grant Senate Bill 114 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,
James W. McKitrick
Director, Legislative and Constituent Services

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