



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

April 1, 2021

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Office Senate Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – House Bill 1117 – Kent Narrows Bridge – State Highway Right-of-Way – Fishing Prohibition

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources provides the following information on House Bill 1117 as amended. This bill will prohibit pedestrians from catching fish or attempting to catch fish by any means on or under the Maryland Route 18 drawbridge at the Kent Narrows in Queen Anne's County.

Persons fishing from the Old Kent Narrows Bridge on Maryland Route 18 is a frequent occurrence that endangers the safety of the person fishing from the bridge due the proximity of passing traffic. Fishing from this bridge also poses a potential hazard to recreational boaters and commercial fishermen passing beneath, as they are occasionally hit by fishing gear being cast from the bridge and have become entangled in abandoned gear left suspended from the bridge. Similarly, access beneath the bridge is treacherous and has led to situations of individuals slipping into the channel while attempting to fish.

Due to conditions attached to funding that was used to improve the Maryland Route 18 crossing several years ago, the current signage on both ends of the bridge prohibiting fishing cannot be legally enforced. HB 1117 places the necessary prohibition in the Transportation Article, allowing for enforcement by all state and local law enforcement officers, as every agency has the ability to write transportation violations. Conversely, if this prohibition was drafted to the Natural Resources Article, only Natural Resources Police has the means to write citations.

Thank you for allowing the department to provide the above information on HB 1117 for the committee's careful consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

James W. McKittrick
Director, Legislative and Constituent Service