



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 1215

Anne Arundel County – Natural Resources – Fishing Gear

Date: March 23, 2022

Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Allison Colden, Sr. Fisheries Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **OPPOSES** HB 1215, a bill which would allow for the establishment of commercial fisheries with archery equipment in Anne Arundel County.

Currently, recreational and commercial fishing in Anne Arundel County waters is limited in most areas to hook and line fishing. In some areas, additional gears, including eel pots, minnow traps, small scale seines (less than 50 feet) are permitted. Many of these restrictions apply to areas important for spawning of yellow perch and other species in Anne Arundel County waters.

HB 1215 alters the current law by limiting hook and line fishing restrictions to commercial fishers only, while also adding archery equipment to the list of approved commercial fishing gear. This creates significant uncertainty with respect to the permissible gears for use by recreational anglers in Anne Arundel County. By removing recreational restrictions, HB 1215 opens up additional gear types to be used in sensitive habitat areas including nets, seines, and archery equipment.

Commercial bowfishing regulations allow for the commercial harvest of any fish species except sharks, lobsters, walleye, striped bass, striped bass hybrids, northern pike, muskies, bass, and snapping turtles. However, any other species of fish could be targeted commercially, even those without a fishery management plan. Expanding commercial fisheries on unregulated species is a significant concern. Without proper data collection and management in place, it is nearly impossible for fisheries managers to know the impact fisheries are having on the target species and the ecosystem.

The Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee amended the Senate cross-file, SB 713, to specify that bowfishing activities were specifically targeted toward invasive Northern snakeheads and that all other commercial and recreational fishing in Anne Arundel County is still subject to existing laws and regulations. With these amendments to HB 1215, CBF would be comfortable removing our opposition, but oppose HB 1215 as currently drafted.

CBF urges the Committee's UNFAVORABLE report on HB 1215. For more information, please contact Dr. Allison Colden, Maryland Senior Fisheries Scientist at acolden@cbf.org and 443.482.2160.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.