



# Assateague Coastal Trust, Inc.

P.O. Box 731, Berlin, MD 21811

[www.ACTforBays.org](http://www.ACTforBays.org)

(410) 629-1538

[mail@ACTforBays.org](mailto:mail@ACTforBays.org)

## **SJ0003 – Commercial Fishery Disaster Declaration Due to Invasive Species**

**Feb 15, 2024**

**Position: Favorable**

I am writing to express my **SUPPORT** for **SJ0003**, concerning the Commercial Fishery Disaster Declaration Due to Invasive Species. The invasive Blue Catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*), initially introduced to Virginia for recreational fishing, has now proliferated throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed to near catastrophic levels. This explosive population increase has resulted in a direct threat to the native species and a significant negative impact on the State's commercial fisheries.

**The observed high densities of invasive Blue Catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*), flathead catfish (*Pylodictis olivaris*), and Northern Snakehead (*Channa argus*), have raised legitimate concerns about the potential detrimental effects on the State's commercial fishery species.** The population decline of native species not only undermines the ecological balance of the Bay but also poses a severe threat to the livelihoods of commercial watermen and the overall state economy.

Governor Wes Moore's 2023 request for a commercial fishery disaster declaration from the U.S. Department of Commerce was a crucial step, highlighting the urgency of the situation. The negative impact of these invasive species cannot be overlooked, with immediate action needed to address the damage caused. **It is crucial that the General Assembly supports Governor Wes Moore's request to the U.S. Department of Commerce for a commercial fishery disaster declaration.** Additionally, further efforts to seek federal assistance to protect and rehabilitate the State's commercial fisheries are essential due to the abundance of invasive species.

**The Assateague Coastal Trust (ACT) urges the Senate's SUPPORT for SJ0003 and consideration for the pressing need to address the ecological and economic consequences of invasive species in Maryland's waters.** Taking proactive measures to mitigate the spread and impact of invasive species will not only protect the State's natural resources but also sustain the economic well-being of those who rely on commercial fishing. As a representative of the organization, and Waterkeeper for the waters of the upper Pocomoke River and MD Coastal Bays, I strongly urge your support for this resolution.



**MISSION:** Working with diverse community partners, we protect and defend the health of Delmarva's waters through advocacy, education, science, and the enforcement of clean water laws.

**ACT is a 501(c)3 Non-profit Organization – Please consider donating by scanning here.**

It is within our collective responsibility to safeguard the State's fisheries and preserve the Chesapeake Bay watershed's delicate ecological balance. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

**Taylor Swanson,**

Assateague Coastkeeper, on behalf of Assateague Coastal Trust.