



Kim Coble
Executive Director

2024 Board of
Directors

Lynn Heller, Chair
The Hon. Nancy Kopp,
Treasurer
Kimberly Armstrong
Candace Dodson-Reed
Verna Harrison
Melanie Hartwig-Davis
Charles Hernick
The Hon. Steve Lafferty
Patrick Miller
Bonnie L. Norman
Katherine (Kitty)
Thomas

February 14, 2024

SUPPORT: SJ0003 - Commercial Fishery Disaster Declaration Due to Invasive Species

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports SJ0003 - Commercial Fishery Disaster Declaration Due to Invasive Species, and we thank Senator Bailey for his leadership on this issue.

Blue catfish, not native to Maryland waters, were introduced into the Potomac River Basin in Virginia in the 1970's. Since that time the population and spread of this fish has increased to concerning levels and it can now be found throughout the Chesapeake Bay.¹ The substantial increase in the population of blue catfish has had a negative effect on native fish stocks, especially crabs, striped bass, and menhaden, all of which blue catfish consume. These effects are compounded by pressure from other large, invasive fish, including flathead catfish and northern snakehead.

Additionally, a change in federal regulations in 2017 to move the regulation of all catfish from the Food and Drug Administration to the USDA has hampered commercial harvest of the blue catfish in Maryland.²

While the U.S. Secretary of Commerce was unable to issue the requested Disaster Declaration in December 2023, Maryland LCV supports the efforts of the Moore Administration and the spirit of this resolution to continue to work toward support for Maryland commercial fisheries and the delicate balance on the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Efforts should continue at the state level and with requests for federal support to address the negative impacts invasive fish like blue catfish and northern snakehead are causing to the abundance of native fish and shellfish in the Chesapeake Bay.

Maryland LCV supports this resolution and urges a favorable report.

¹ https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Documents/Invasive_Catfish_%20Fact_Sheet.pdf

² <https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2021/04/13/dnr-applauds-resolution-to-ease-restrictions-on-blue-catfish-industry/>