

SenatorBailey_FAV_SB186.pdf

Uploaded by: Jack Bailey

Position: FAV

JACK BAILEY
Legislative District 29
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Budget & Taxation Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 401
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3673 • 301-858-3673
800-492-7122 Ext. 3673
Jack.Bailey@senate.state.md.us

District Office
Dorsey Professional Park
23680 Three Notch Road, Unit 101
Hollywood, Maryland 20636
240-309-4238

February 4, 2025

Senate Bill 186 – Commercial Blue and Flathead Catfish Finfish Trotline License – Prohibited Regulations

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 186, which would allow holders of commercial blue and flathead catfish finfish trotline licenses to catch these catfish south of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

As I know this committee is aware, invasive fish species pose a substantial threat to our State's ecosystem. As part of our efforts to remove these nonnative species from our waterways, two years ago, we passed legislation to reinstate the Commercial Blue and Flathead Catfish Finfish Trotline License which had been allowed to sunset. However, under present regulations that have been adopted by the Department, these trotlines cannot be used in the Chesapeake Bay south of the Bay Bridge.

The holders of these licenses are a critical part of efforts to remove these harmful species of fish from our waterways. I do not believe that these current restrictions are consistent with the goal of getting as many of these fish out of the water as possible. It is important to note that this bill does not change anything else in the statute creating the license or of any other part of State law. It does not relieve the license holders of their obligation to only catch blue and flathead catfish; this bill simply removes the restrictions on where these catfish can be caught.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 186. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Bailey'.

Senator Jack Bailey

SB186 Commercial Blue and Flathead Catfish Finfish

Uploaded by: Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio

Position: FAV



Talbot Watermen Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 324 • Bozman, MD 21612 • (410) 745-9759 • info@talbotwatermen.org

February 4, 2025

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
The Honorable Cheryl Kagan
Vice Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman and Vice Chair Kagan,

We are writing to express our **support** for **Senate Bill 186 Commercial Blue and Flathead Catfish Finfish Trotline License - Prohibited Regulations**.

Senate Bill 186 will allow finfish trotline licensees to fish in the main stem of the Chesapeake Bay south of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Blue Catfish and Flathead Catfish are invasive species that are posing a significant threat to both Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts and the commercial fishing industry. With the ability to live for more than 20 years and grow to over 100 pounds, they are preying on some of the Bay's most important species. With few natural predators, increasing commercial harvest is one of the most effective management tools Maryland can deploy. Senate Bill 186 will expand harvest opportunities and help protect our native species.

We thank you in advance for your consideration and respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 186.

Sincerely,

Herman Jeffrey Harrison
President

Contact: Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio
R&R Solutions, LLC
(443) 786-2137
jeannie@randrsolutions.us

SB 186 - CBF - UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Allison Colden

Position: UNF



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 186

Commercial Blue and Flathead Catfish Finfish Trotline License – Prohibited Regulations

Date: February 4, 2025
To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: **UNFAVORABLE**
From: Allison Colden,
Executive Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **OPPOSES** Senate Bill 186 which would prohibit the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from promulgating regulations that would limit finfish trotlining for blue or flathead catfish in the mainstem of the Chesapeake Bay below the William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial Bridge (“Bay Bridge”).

Blue catfish were first introduced in the 1970s and 1980s in Virginia to develop a recreational fishery. Since then, these highly invasive fish have rapidly expanded their range into nearly every Chesapeake Bay tributary. Blue catfish are voracious generalist predators that feed on native species such as menhaden, striped bass, eel, shad, river herring, and blue crabs. In areas where blue catfish populations have been established, catfish make up approximately 75% of the total fish weight of all fish inhabiting the river.

CBF has long supported regulations that would facilitate the commercial harvest and removal of blue catfish to minimize its negative effects, including the creation of the special commercial trotline license that is the subject of SB 186. However, trotlines are a non-specific fishing gear, meaning the hooks can attract and capture any species that encounter them, not just catfish. Given the likelihood of interactions with other commercial species (e.g. white perch) and federally endangered species (e.g. Atlantic sturgeon) in the Bay’s mainstem, expanding the use of trotlines to an additional 400,000 acres should be considered carefully.

DNR has initiated a pilot program to allow blue catfish trotlining south of the Bay Bridge in a limited capacity with DNR staff observing fishing trips and documenting any bycatch. This one-year pilot program, slated for completion in November 2025, will produce valuable data that will be reviewed by DNR’s stakeholder advisory committees before being extended or expanded to additional users. CBF believes that this approach allows for the flexibility SB 186 seeks to achieve while ensuring the impacts of any such changes are documented and well-understood by both DNR and industry members before being finalized.

For these reasons, CBF urges the Committee’s UNFAVORABLE report on SB 186.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

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 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.

SB0186_DNR_LOI_EEE_2-4-25.pdf

Uploaded by: Dylan Behler

Position: INFO



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 4, 2025

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 186 – First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Commercial Blue and Flathead Catfish Finfish Trotline License – Prohibited Regulations

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department currently prohibits the use of finfish trotlines in the Chesapeake Bay mainstem south of the Bay Bridge due to ecological concerns and potential user conflicts with other gears. The Department is currently developing a pilot program to test the feasibility of allowing trotlines in this area of the Bay based on the recommendations of the Invasive Catfish Advisory Committee (ICAC), organized under the Sport Fisheries and Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commissions. ICAC recommended allowing finfish trotlines in most portions of the Chesapeake Bay including Tangier Sound, which is a pupping ground for protected shark species and may not be an ideal environment for catfish.

This pilot program is scheduled to be taking applications for participation starting in early February. The pilot will allow the Department to gather information on harvest efficiency, bycatch, and user conflict. Conducting a pilot in this manner allows us to address fishery issues early, educate the public around any concerns and pave the way for implementing a robust fishery in the future.

We appreciate the continued conversations with the Sponsor with regard to this legislation and appreciate the continued collaboration around how to address the Blue Catfish population in the State.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is the first time this bill has been introduced.

BILL EXPLANATION

The bill prohibits the Department from prohibiting certain license holders from using finfish trotlines in the mainstem of the Chesapeake Bay.

Contact: Dylan Behler, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
dylan.behler@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-924-0891 (cell)