



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

February 12, 2025

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 446 – 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. As of February 7, 2025, the Department is soliciting for applications to 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.

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 sponsors 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.

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