



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

March 26, 2025

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 186 – Third Reader

SHORT TITLE: Natural Resources – Invasive Blue Catfish Pilot Program

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department supports the third reader version of SB186. The agency, after receiving recommendations from the Invasive Catfish Advisory Committee (ICAC), began in March 2025 a pilot program to test feasibility of allowing finfish trotlines in the mainstem of the Chesapeake Bay south of the Bay Bridge. The bill would make this pilot a statutory requirement. It also requests the agency to create any regulations possible to control the population of invasive catfish. The Department is supportive of population control measures for invasive Blue Catfish, including increasing opportunities for commercial harvest of the invasive Blue Catfish. The bill also makes one change to the current finfish trotline rules by allowing 2400 feet of trotline instead of 1200 feet. Existing allowances for non-corrodible hooks and unlimited hooks are added to statute.

Additionally, as amended, the bill folds in provisions of SB960/HB1249 and asks the agency to consider a pilot for electrofishing for invasive catfish. The agency is currently working on a project that will provide an educational opportunity in the summer of 2025 for commercial licensees interested in a potential pilot in 2026. The goal of the 2025 project is to allow commercial taking of the invasive catfish collected through electrofishing sampling. However, this may lead to a pilot in 2026 with a goal to keep an even market for the fish through the summer months.

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 as amended requires the Department to create a pilot for finfish trotlining south of the Bay Bridge, expands current allowances related to trotlines, encourages the agency to consider a pilot for electrofishing of blue catfish, and requires a report by December 2025.

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