

Invasive Catfish in the Chesapeake Bay

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GIT Coordinator*

December 18, 2018



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

- The Problem
- History of ICTF
- 2014 Recommendations
- Progress to date
- Recent Actions
- 2018 Observations
- The Future of ICTF



The Problem

- Blue and flathead catfish were introduced in Virginia as a sportfish
- Both species have since expanded their range throughout much of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
- Blue catfish have a wide diet, consuming clams, plant matter, insects, crustaceans, worms and other fish
- What impacts are these fishes having on native species?

Invasive Catfish Task Force

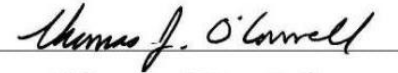
- January 2012 - Adoption of Invasive Catfish Policy
- SFGIT Executive Committee recognized the threat posed by blue and flathead catfish and agreed to work on:
 - Public awareness campaigns, including efforts to prevent further introductions
 - Improve scientific understanding of biology and population dynamics
 - Models that will aid in understanding the potential impacts fish community
 - Management measures aimed at controlling populations and mitigating adverse effects of blue and flathead catfish
 - Identify high-risk/high-value opportunities for containment and/or mitigation
- 2014 – Report with seven management recommendations

Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team Executive Committee

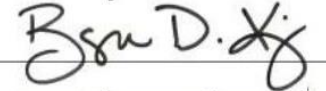
FOR NOAA



FOR MD-DNR



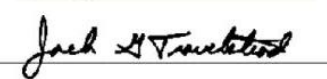
FOR DC-DDOE



FOR PRFC



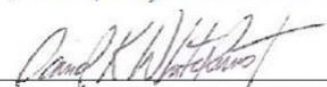
FOR VMRC



FOR ASMFC



FOR VDGIF



1

- Jurisdictions should work together to design and implement targeted fishery independent removals of invasive catfish

2

- Coordinate efforts and incentives to develop a large-scale, commercial fishery

3

- Incentivize harvests of invasive catfishes and explore the use of electrofishing for commercial harvest purposes

4

- Establish dedicated monitoring efforts
- Develop early detection and rapid response programs

Recommendations



5

- Formal coordination between invasive catfish experts and the Fish Passage Workgroup of the Chesapeake Bay Program

6

- Cross-jurisdictional review of current fishing policies and regulations across jurisdictions to consider current regulations that may facilitate persistence and expansion

7

- Communicate and coordinate information across jurisdictions

Recommendations



Progress

Funded Research

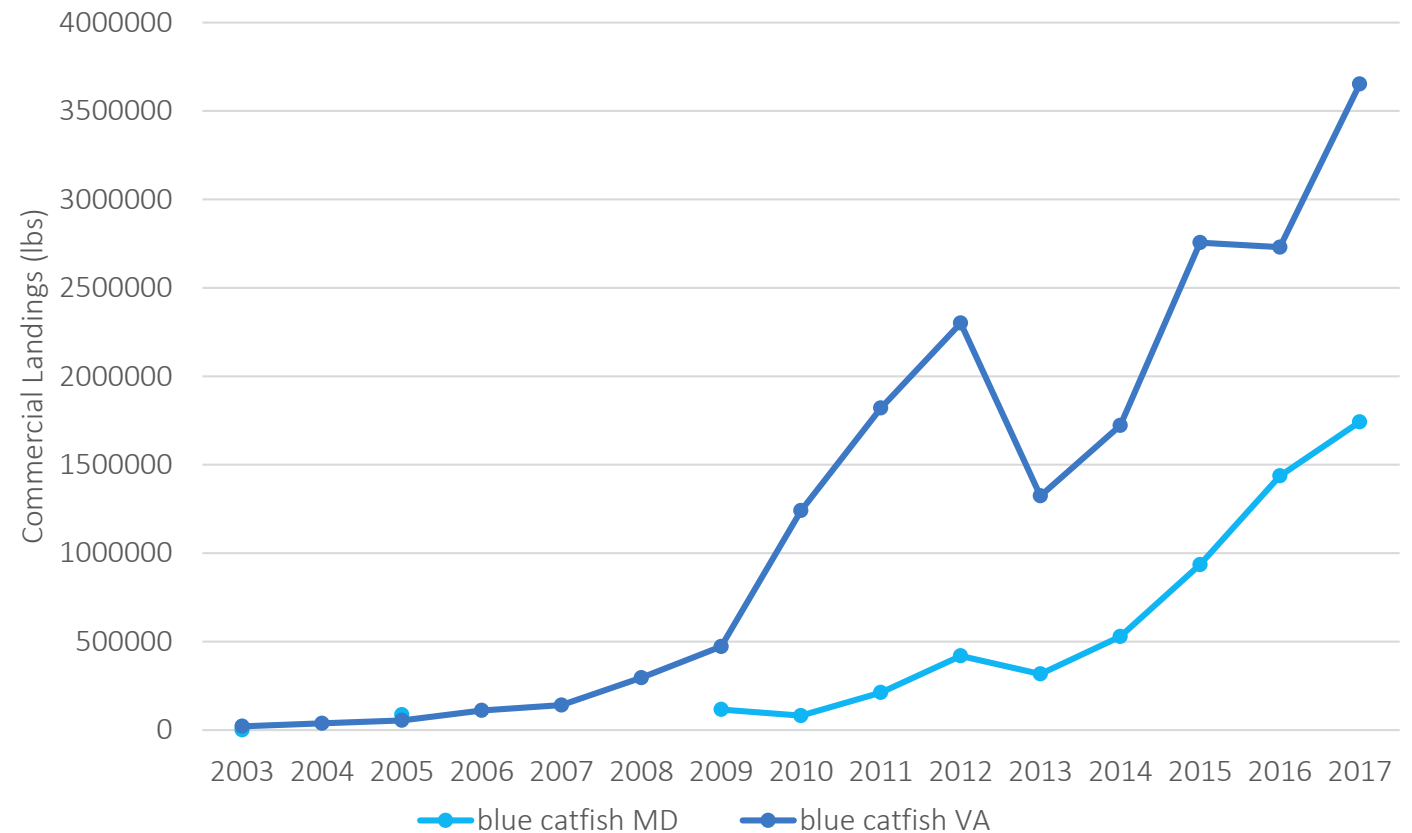
- 2011-2015
- Studies on contaminant burdens, population size, trophic dynamics, and threats to ecologically and economically important species
- Over \$900,000 in NOAA funding

2017 Science Symposium

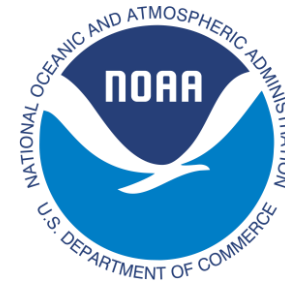
- Presentations on diet, monitoring efforts, movement dynamics, contaminants, and population estimates
- Stakeholder panel
- Summary report now available



A Growing Fishery



Coordination



Tributary	First Observed	Species Present	Population Status	Fishery
Choptank	2008	Blue		Recreational
James	1970s-1980s	Blue and flathead		Commercial and recreational
Nanticoke	2008	Blue		Commercial and recreational
Patuxent	Early 2000s	Blue		Commercial and recreational
Potomac	1990s	Blue and flathead		Commercial and recreational
Rappahannock	Mid-1970s	Blue		Commercial and recreational
Susquehanna	1991	flathead	growing	Commercial and recreational
York	1980s	Blue and flathead		Commercial, recreational declining

US distributor plans to hike invasive catfish sales

By Christine Blank
October 4, 2018



Congressional Seafood Company, which already sells invasive blue catfish to Whole Foods Market and other major buyers, is aiming to significantly grow sales of the fish in the state of Maryland.

Around four years ago, Jessup, Maryland-based Congressional began selling blue catfish, an invasive species in the Chesapeake Bay, the Potomac River, and other waterways. Blue catfish feeds on many native species, including bluegill, rockfish, and mussels.

"I started reading about the explosion of the species and had to try to sell it."

vice president Tim Sughrue, told SeafoodSource. "However, one of the hardest things about selling a fish that has never been sold before."

Blue catfish has a great flavor and it tastes similar to snapper to rockfish, Sugarloaf, and 70 percent for turbot on average, versus around 65 percent for mahi and 70 percent for turbot.

After contacting several restaurant and retailer chains, Congressional got its first order from the Restaurant Group, based in Washington D.C., agreed to menu blue catfish.

In 2015, Congressional got another break when Whole Foods Market's mission statement included sustainable sourcing.

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Flathead catfish, swimming under the radar for years, now raising concerns

PA biologists studying impact of large, invasive species on native fish populations

By Donna Morelli on November 26, 2017

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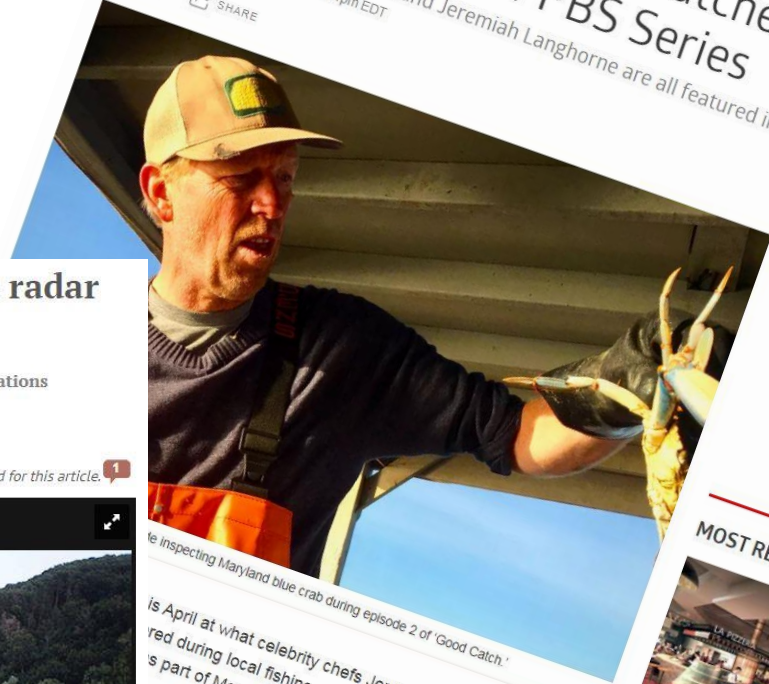


Charlie Wandrei of Adams, MA, vacations in Pennsylvania every year to fish for flathead catfish. Here, he shows off a 35-pounder. This controversial nonnative species is found in the lower Susquehanna River and Bay freshwater tributaries. (Rod Bates, Koinonia Guide Service)

3 Area Chefs Cook Fresh Catches from the Chesapeake in New PBS Series

Jennifer Carroll, Spike Gjerde, and Jeremiah Langhorne are all featured in 'Good Catch'
by Warren Rojas | Mar 19, 2018, 4:31pm EDT

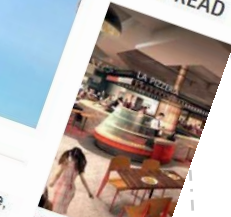
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Inspecting Maryland blue crab during episode 2 of 'Good Catch.'

is April at what celebrity chefs Jennifer Carroll, Spike Gjerde, and Jeremiah Langhorne are all featured in 'Good Catch' as part of Maryland Public Television's Chesapeake Bay

MOST READ



The Most Anticipated Winter 2019

Recent Actions

- Reports finalized
 - 2017 Symposium Summary
 - Updated 2014 Recommendations
- Discussion on what should be done next



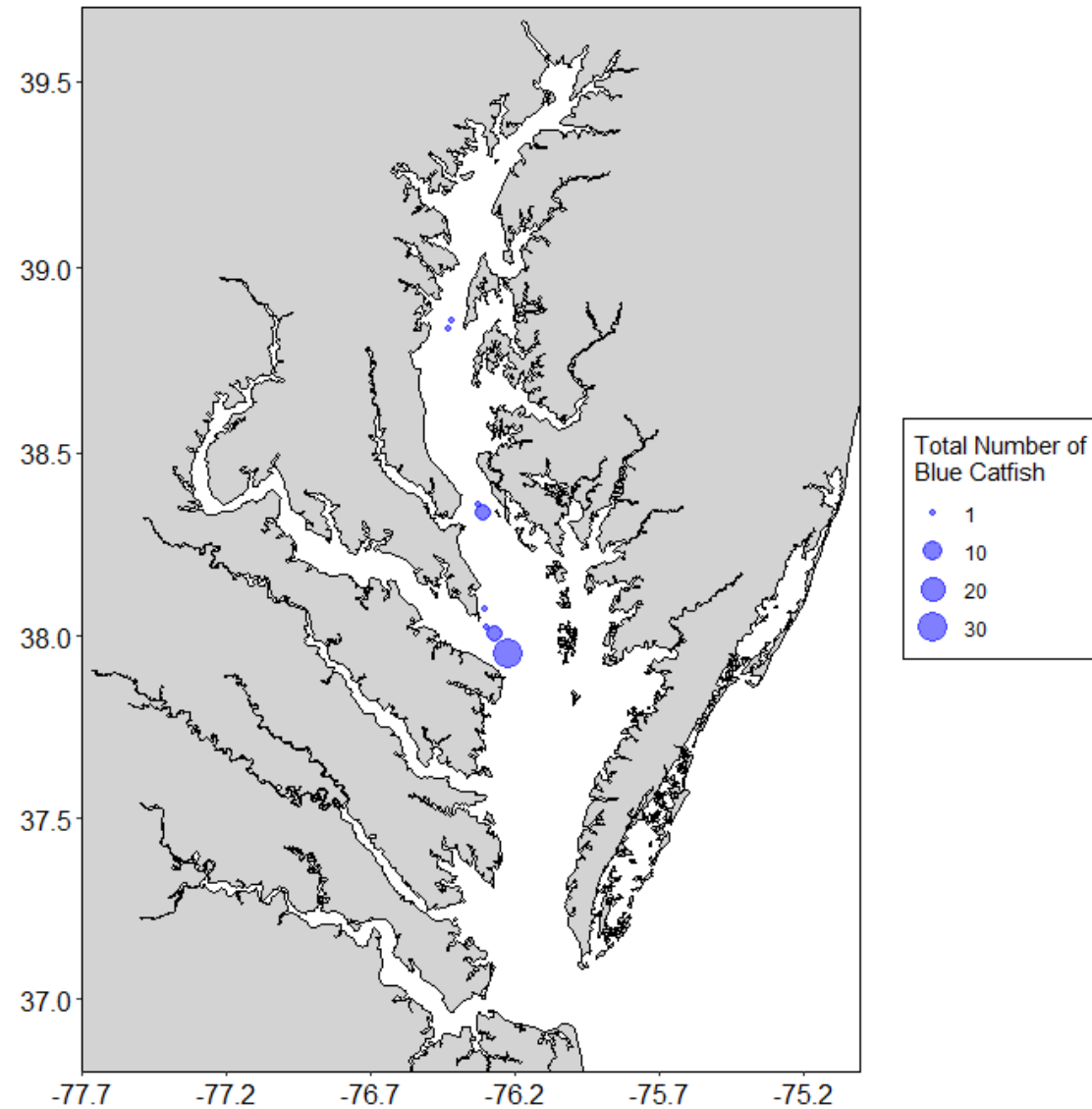
- After publishing recent reports, the ICTF drafted a letter for the Executive Committee requesting guidance
 - Summarizing efforts up to this point
 - Seeking input from Executive Committee on what tasks the ICTF should be focused on
 - Recommendation: an inter-jurisdictional fishery management plan for invasive catfish, containing
 - a systematic description of the fishery
 - clear management goals around the commercial fishery, recreational fishery, and ecological sustainability



**November
Ex Comm
Call**

Effects of a wet year...

Blue catfish catch in November 2018, ChesMMA Trawl Survey (R. Latour, PI)



**What role
should the
ICTF continue
to play?**

- What immediate actions are needed?
- Who or what should be coordinating?
- Is the Fisheries GIT finished with this issue?



Matt Rath/CBP