

# INVASIVE CATFISH TASK FORCE MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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Management Board Meeting  
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# OVERVIEW

- Issue and Task Force Background
- Task Force Management Recommendations
- Management Board Support?
  - Fisheries GIT would like to move forward with jurisdictions to explore implementing these recommendations

*Background information and the management recommendations are summarized in the Final Report's Executive Summary (p.4-8).*

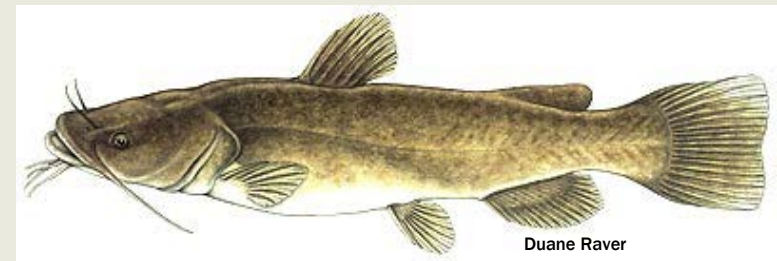
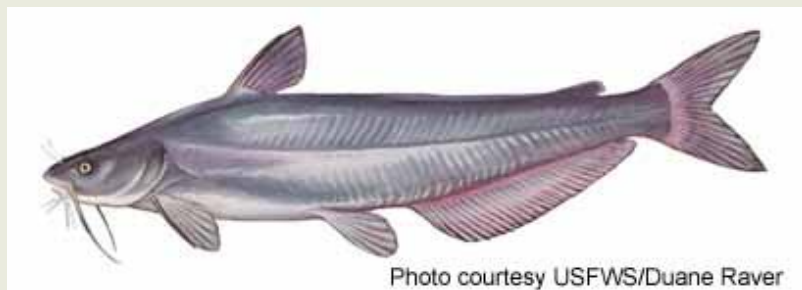
# HERE THEY ARE!



Blue catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*)

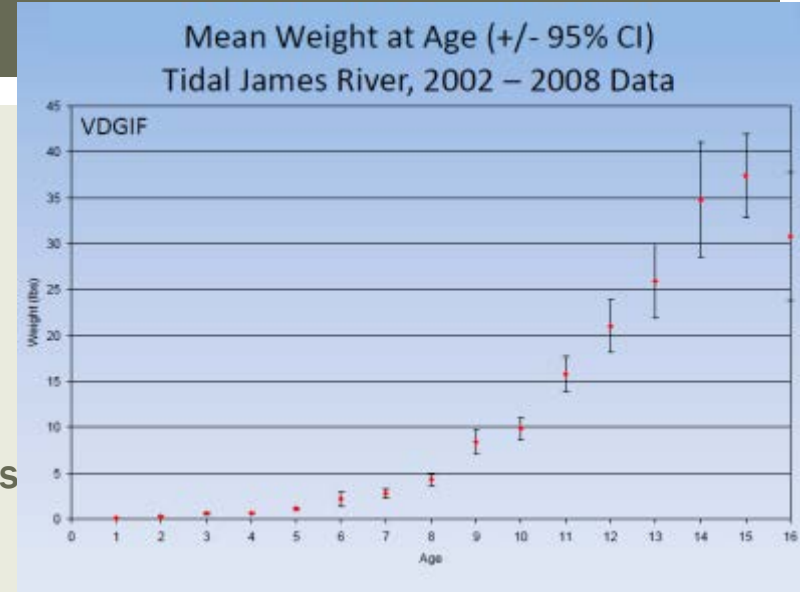


Flathead catfish (*Pylodictis olivaris*)



# WHY SHOULD WE WORRY?

- High fecundity (lots of babies)
- Long lived
- Fast growth
- Diet dominated by other fish at around age 3
- Changing trophic structure of our systems
- Hampering restoration of anadromous species
- Big fish = big appetite
- Few natural predators
- Habitat competition with natives



# CATFISH DIET



VCU



VDGIF

- As adults, both species feed primarily on fish and shellfish including shad, river herring, menhaden, blue crabs, soft shell clams, and freshwater mussels. As the catfish in the Bay grow larger, they will consume more native species fish.



VCU



VCU



# HOW MANY ARE OUT THERE?



MD DNR Potomac River Electrofishing Survey, 2012

# INVASIVE CATFISH TASK FORCE

- Workgroup formed in 2012 under the Fisheries GIT
- Responsible for coordinating the best available science and developing management recommendations to mitigate invasive catfish spread and minimize impacts on native fish species

## Task Force members:

- NOAA
- MD DNR
- SERC
- Potomac River Fisheries Commission
- VIMS
- VCU
- VDGIF
- VMRC
- Virginia Marine Products Board
- DC Division of Fish and Wildlife
- PFBC
- DNREC

# HOW SHOULD WE ADDRESS INVASIVE CATFISH IN THE BAY?



# MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

## REDUCE POPULATIONS

- **Recommendation 1: Targeted Fishery-Independent Removals**
  - *What: design and implement fishery-independent removals*
  - *Where: places of significant ecological value*

# MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

## REDUCE POPULATIONS

### ■ Recommendation 2: Commercial Fishery and Market

- *What: accelerate efforts and incentives to develop large-scale, commercial fishery*
- *Where: Baywide – coordinate across jurisdictions*

### ■ Recommendation 3: Increased Harvest – Electrofishing

- *What: incentivize increased harvests and explore the use of electrofishing for commercial harvest*
- *Where: Baywide – areas with commercial harvest*

# MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

## SLOW SPREAD

- **Recommendation 4: Monitoring and Early Detection**
  - *What: establish monitoring programs to track distribution and population status; establish early detection programs; support and synthesize research results*
  - *Where: tributaries where catfish are present (monitoring); ecologically significant areas that have not yet been invaded (early detection)*

# MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

## SLOW SPREAD

### ■ Recommendation 5: Fish Passage Barriers

- What: Consider invasive catfish potential spread in dam removal discussions
- Where: Priority dam removal areas

### ■ Recommendation 6: Review of Regulations

- What: review regulations to evaluate their effectiveness in preventing further spread
- Where: Baywide – all jurisdictions

# MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS PUBLIC OUTREACH

- **Recommendation 7: Consistent Communication**
  - *What: make information more accessible and coordinated Baywide; develop web portal to compile invasive catfish information*
  - *Where: Baywide – all jurisdictions*



# NEXT STEPS

- February 2014
  - Briefed the Fisheries GIT Executive Committee (NOAA, ASMFC, PRFC, MD, VA, DC) and additional jurisdictional managers (DE, PA, VA DGIF).
  - Received overall positive feedback and commitment to explore implementing these recommendations in all jurisdictions.
- March 2014
  - Final Report submitted to STAC for scientific review.
- April 2014
  - Seek Management Board support of Fisheries GIT's efforts to work with jurisdictions on these recommendations
- Work with jurisdictions to move forward on these recommendations

# QUESTIONS?

MARYLAND STATE RECORD  
84 LBS (2012, POTOMAC)



Captain Josh Fitchett (left) helps Ed Jones display his Maryland record, 84-pound blue catfish.

MD DNR

VIRGINIA STATE RECORD  
102 LBS (2009, JAMES)



VA DGIF

# INVASIVE CATFISH TASK FORCE FINDINGS

- 1) Populations are likely larger and more wide spread than initially thought (make up >70% biomass in some areas)
- 2) Spread continues into upper bay tributaries
- 3) High nutrient levels (eutrophication) likely a contributing factor to high abundances and conditions advantageous to invasive catfish
- 4) Status of invasion different in each tributary (need for targeted, trib specific actions)
- 5) Predation of native species is high and ecological impacts are likely, however, not fully quantified

# INVASIVE CATFISH TASK FORCE FINDINGS

- 6) No effective control/removal mechanisms have been identified and proven
- 7) No dedicated blue and flathead catfish surveys/monitoring programs
- 8) Few tributary population assessments (needed to understand impacts of removal efforts)
- 9) No biomass reduction targets established
- 10) Models suggest fishing would need to increase significantly to begin reducing abundances