

Blue Catfish in Virginia

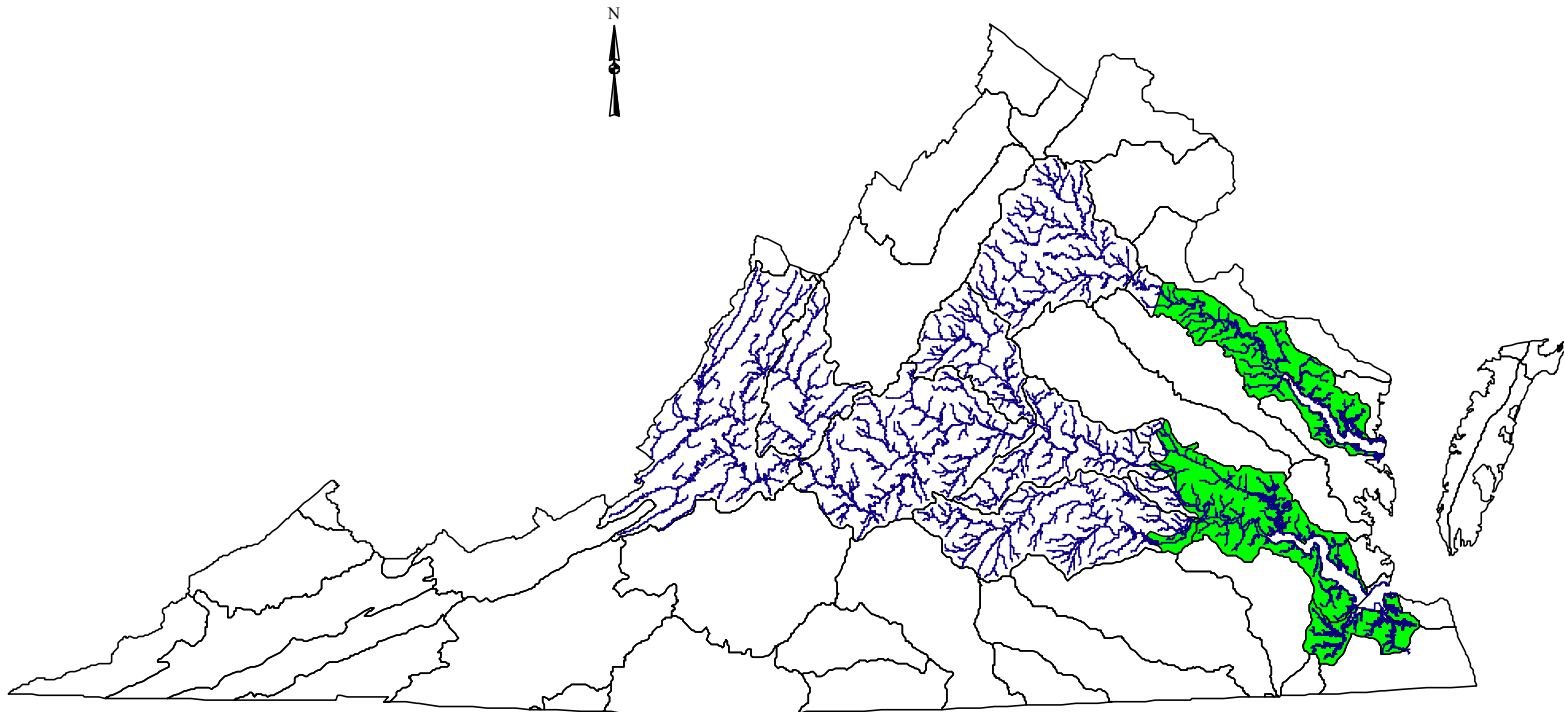
Historical Perspective & Importance to Recreational Fishing

David K. Whitehurst

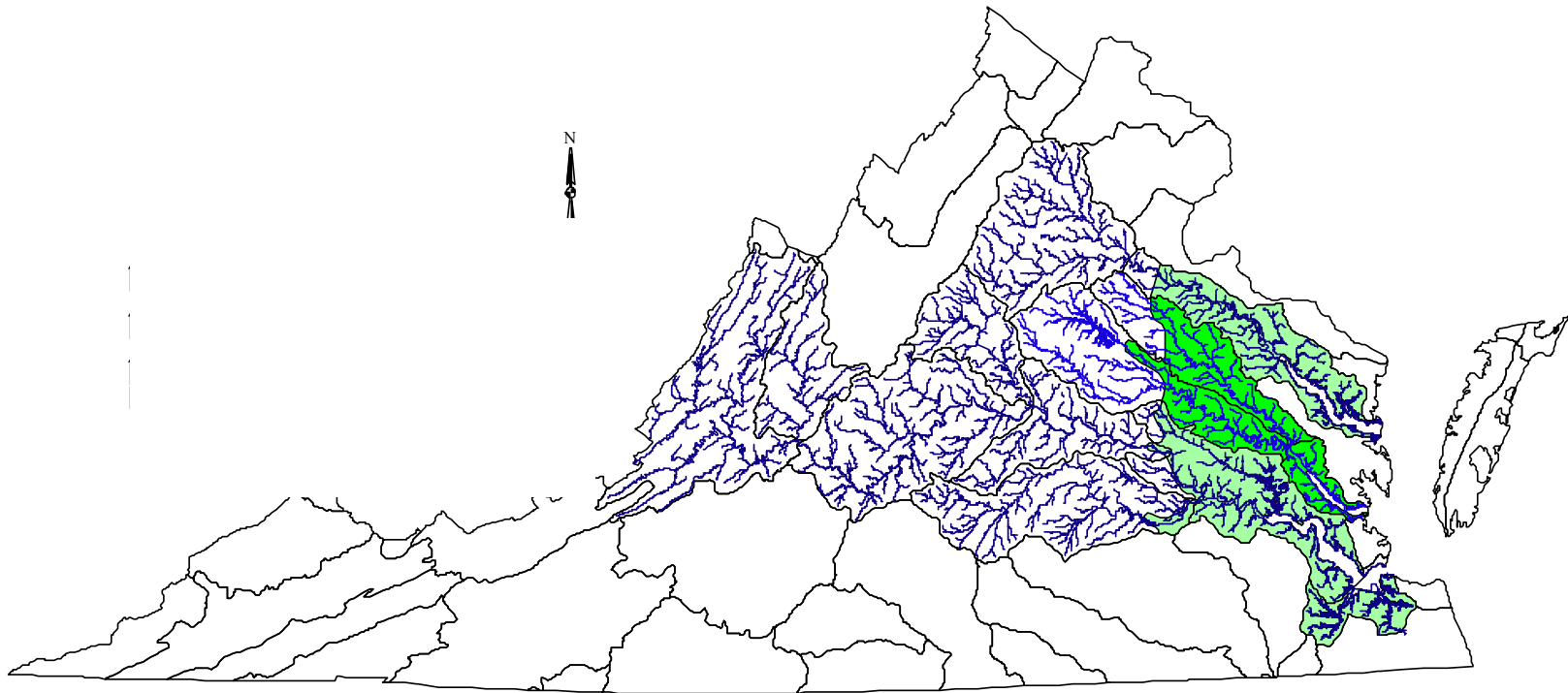
david.whitehurst@dgif.virginia.gov



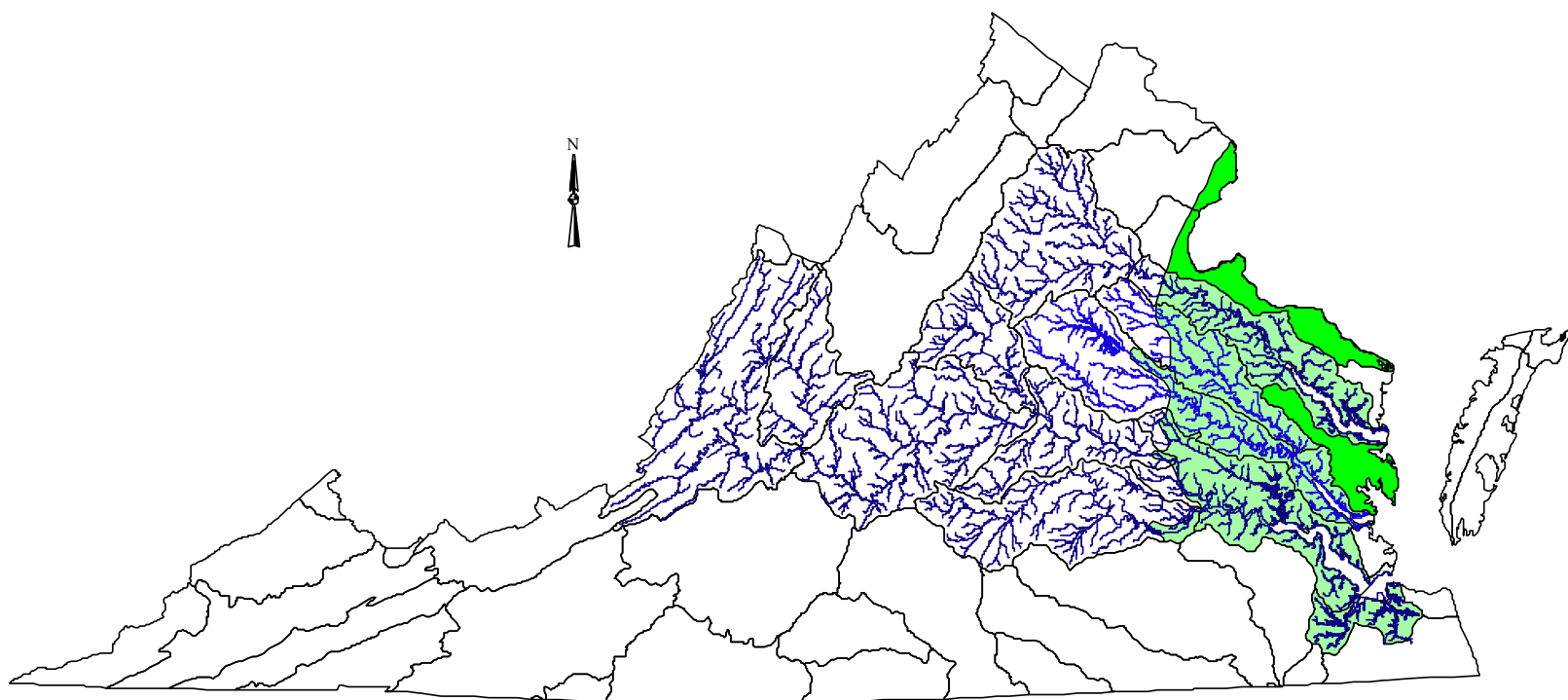
Blue Catfish Introductions to James River & Rappahannock River 1973 - 1977



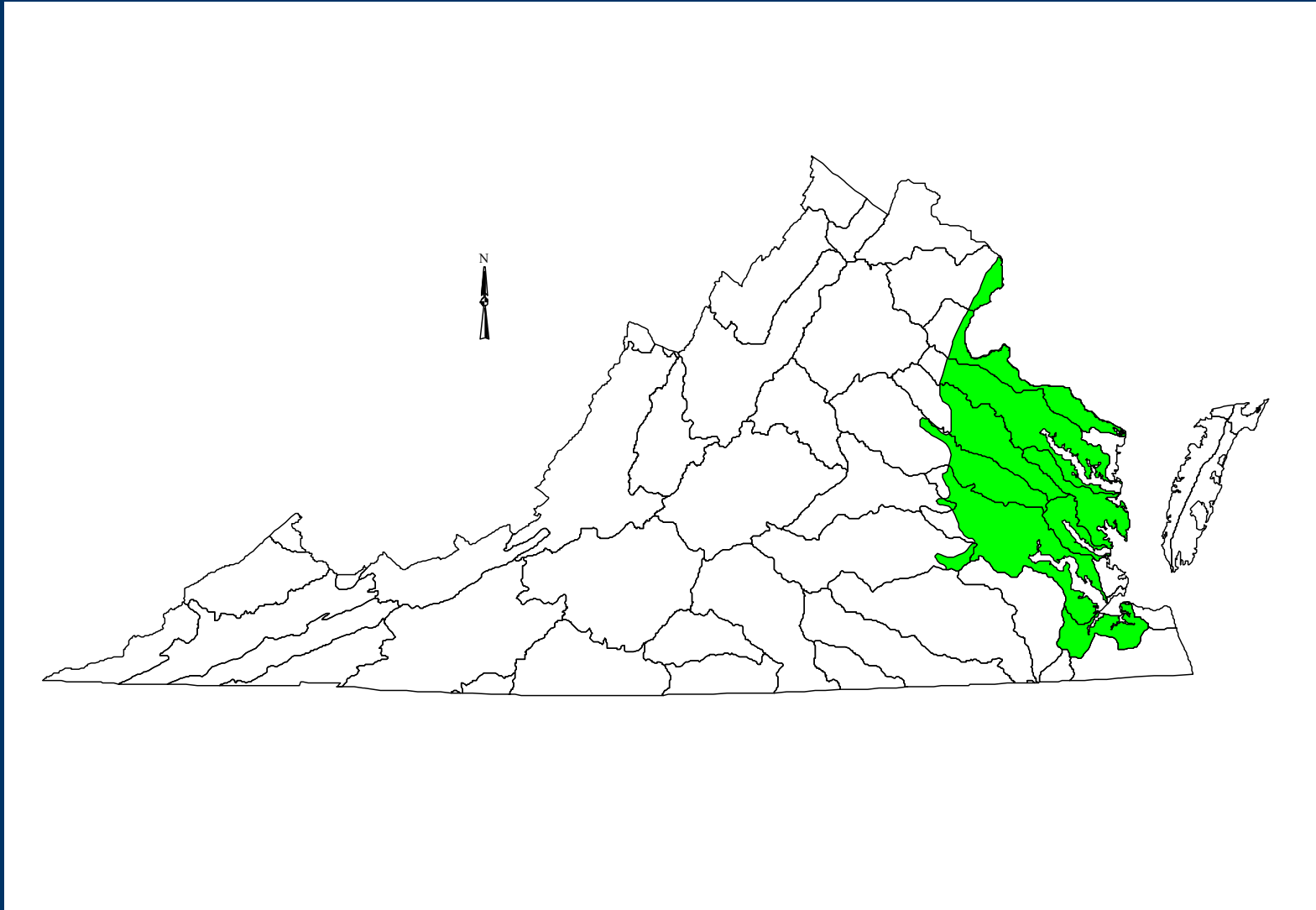
Blue Catfish Introduced to Mattaponi River in 1985 Followed by Colonization of the Pamunkey River



Blue Catfish Established in Potomac River – Date ? Confirmed in Piankatank River – 2002



Blue Catfish Now Occur in all Major Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay



Stocking in Virginia

- Provide recreational and food value to anglers
- Traditional Fisheries Management => Stocking
- Other species introduced to Virginia tidal rivers:
 - Channel Catfish,
 - Largemouth Bass,
 - Smallmouth Bass,
 - Common carp,

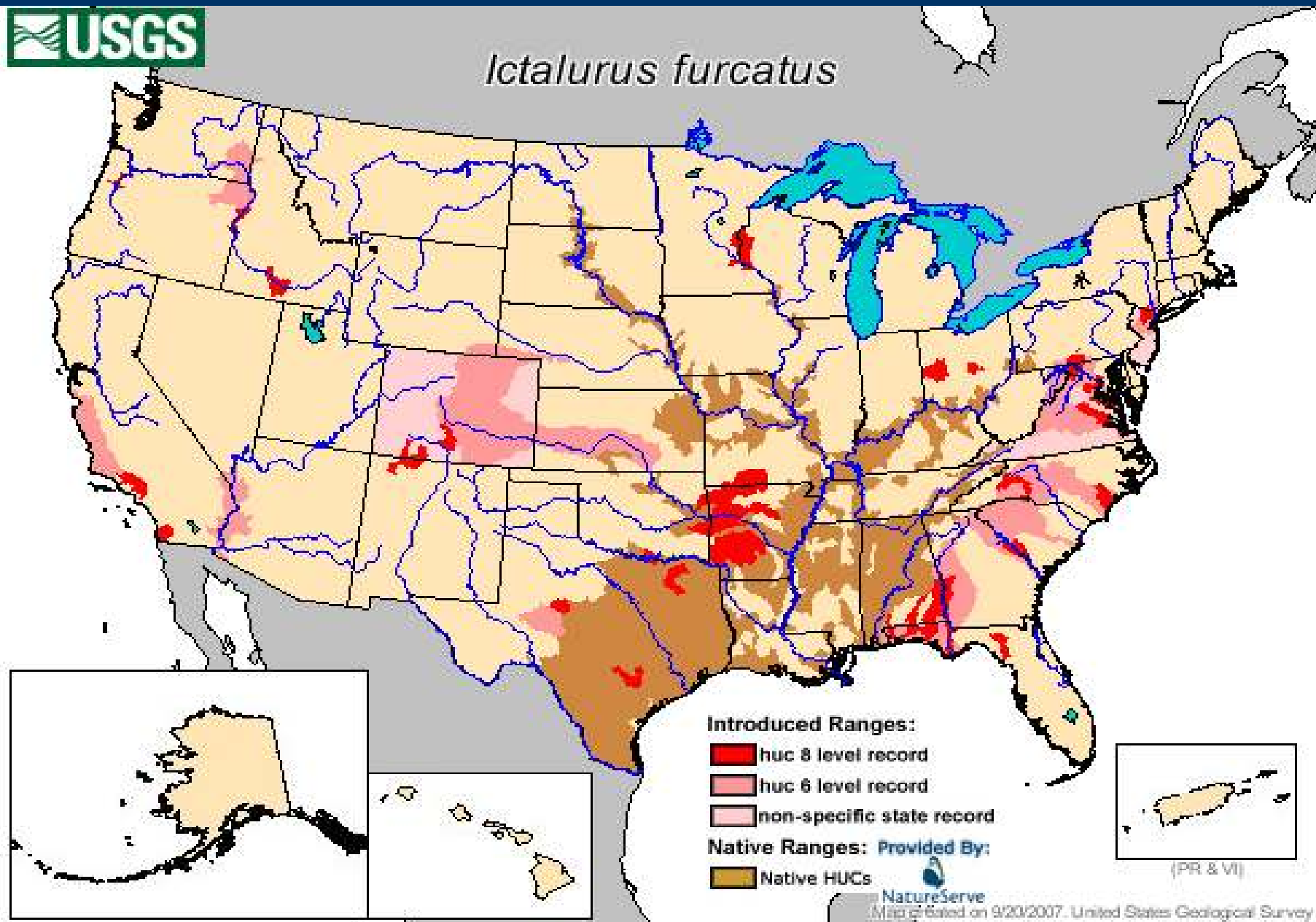
Blue catfish aside, as of mid-1990's freshwater fish community in Virginia tidal waters dominated by introduced species.



Blue Catfish Introductions Widespread



Ictalurus furcatus

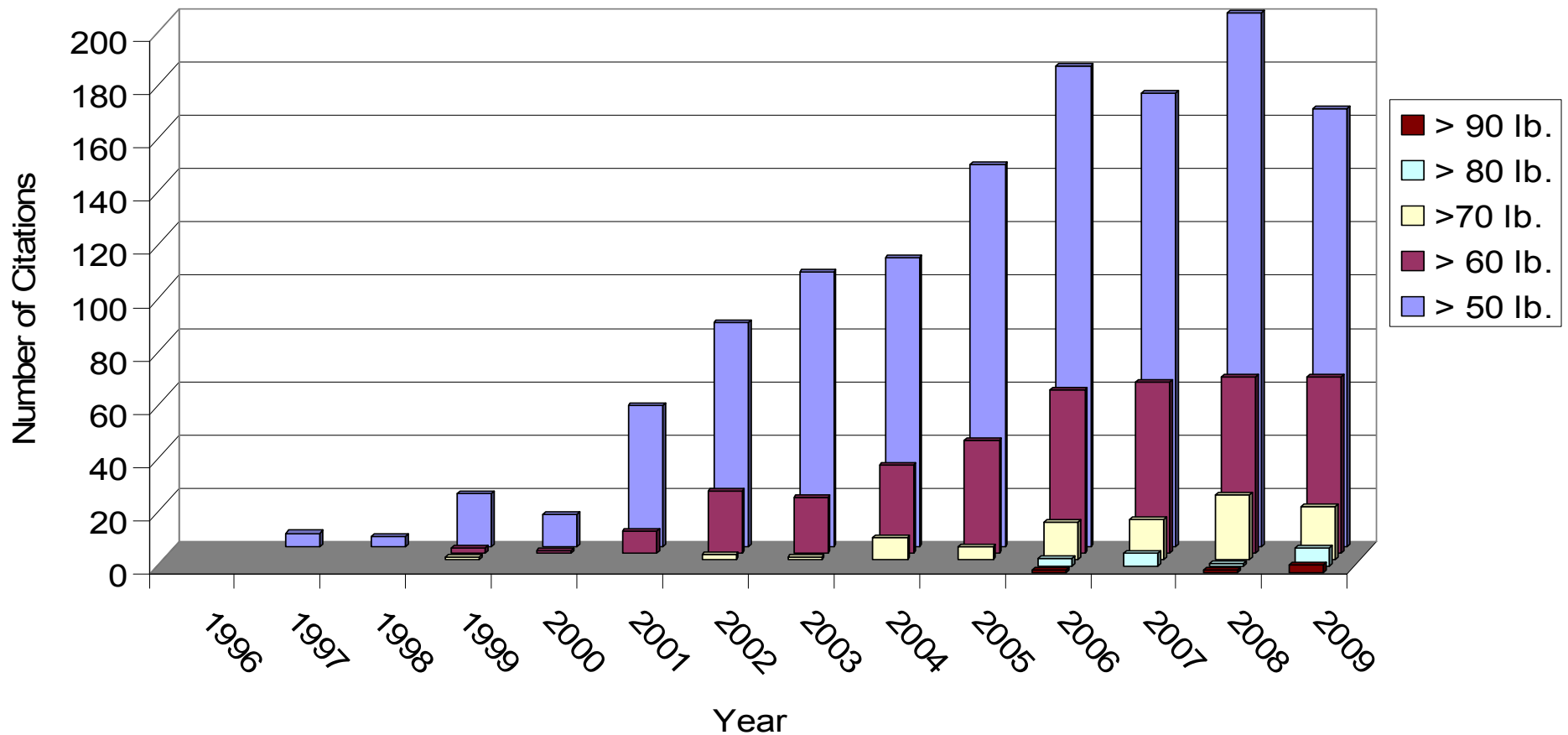


Important Recreational Fisheries

- Key factors determining this “success”
 - Strong recruitment and good survival leading to very high abundance
 - Trophy fishery dependant on rapid growth and good survival



Angler Awards For Blue Catfish >50 Pounds Tidal James River



Anglers have come to expect ten pound increment increases
in the upper end of catches every 3-4 years

2004
83 pounds
(~37.6 kg)





2006
94 pounds
(~ 42.6kg)

18 8:17 AM





2009
102 pounds
(~ 46.4 kg)



Recreational Fishery

- Tidal James is a world class blue catfish fishery
- Total economic value has not been quantified
 - In 2002, an angler survey conducted March – November found anglers direct expenditures totaled \$1.6 million
 - » Hotels, Restaurants, Guides,...
 - Estimated \$2.6 million economic value of recreational catfish fishery during the survey period
 - Survey did not capture night fishing,
 - Was not conducted during December – February, important months for trophy blue catfish angling
- This fishery has grown substantially since 2002

Blue Catfish in Virginia

Historical Perspective & Importance to Recreational Fishing

David K. Whitehurst

david.whitehurst@dgif.virginia.gov

