



ICW Policy Small Group Meeting: May 2025

Friday, May 30 · 11:00am – 11:30am EST

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/qaf-jpoy-nfi>

Or dial: (US) +1 219-400-0131 PIN: 900 832 185#

Meeting Minutes

Action Item: Please provide feedback on recommended blue catfish price per pound - send recommendations to Allie by email (allie.cavanagh@mail.house.gov)

11:00am - 11:05am **Introduction (Allison Colden)**

11:05am - 11:25am **Draft blue catfish legislation**

- Concept that would establish a market with the pet food industry
- 2 year grant with NOAA - money to processing manufacturers
- Guard rails on amount to pay watermen for blue catfish
 - Blue catfish would go into dog/cat feed, animal stock feed, aquaculture feed, any kind of animal feed
- Price to pay to watermen - want to talk more about this
- Establishing transportation mechanisms
 - No more than 15 % of grant to offset those costs
- Cannot be resold for human consumption
- Separate from farm bill - complimentary - but does not fall in line
- Do not want to be too prescriptive in bill language but want to support NOAA - trying to find balance there
- Specifics about data - will not be prescriptive on mechanisms on how we are collecting that data, more so information needed to shape future policy
- 2 year pilot program - does that mean afterwards partnership stops?
 - No - detrimental to food companies/brands to stop collaborations - will want to invest to keep this going
 - One brand wants to create a specific Chesapeake Bay formula

- We are getting creative with this bill and appreciate any feedback
- Group valuable in weighing in on what types of scientific information would be useful?
 - Size distribution
 - Total number of fish/biomass
 - Contaminants based on size distribution
 - Whole fish or scraps from processors?
 - They are buying the whole entire fish. Want to see what parts can be used the most frequently for pet food - also want to draw clear line between human and pet food consumption.
 - Might use filets for pet food and then the scraps for aquaculture
 - Concerns over heavy metals and pollutants in larger fish - pet food industry is less concerned about this - possibly get bigger fish for pet food
 - Do they want the fish fresh or frozen? Pick up daily, weekly?
 - We have not been prescriptive about that - want this information - looking to the group for this information to include within the grant
 - Where are pet food manufacturers located?
 - Nationwide
 - Not determined who will be buying yet?
 - Yes - great conversations with Purina but they do not have transportation yet to the Bay area
 - Transportation might already be in place - with trucks going in similar directions
 - Provide information on existing transportation with Allie
 - Buying directly from watermen? Questions need to be answered before we contact transportation?
 - Tom O'Connell (in the chat): Great opportunity. Will this be limited to blue catfish or will it also allow flathead? Given low yields of flathead, this could be a viable option for increasing flathead harvest.
 - Keeping it specifically to blue catfish - keeping it specific to one species in one geographic area but with opportunity to expand in the future - trying it out in the pilot and seeing where we can go from there - flathead is on the menu for future expansion
 - Ideas to consider:
 - Requiring landing information
 - Providing report to determine number of blue catfish harvested during the pilot and provide geography of where they were collected from
 - Document size
 - Survey of agencies administering this, survey of commercial fishing and processors, survey of food industry - good to report back to congressmen in a couple of years to see how this program worked

- Opportunity here to collect important science - examine alternative gears, filling gaps on diet analysis etc. could also be report out on how this program can help leverage science gaps
 - Full trust in NOAA to determine how data is collected - but also working with committee counsel to find balance to help support NOAA
 - Data required for pet food manufacturers
 - What pieces are used
 - What pieces are sold off to third party (like for fish meal)
 - Like the idea of doing survey to watermen and processors
 - Important to collect economic data as well
 - Before and after program - value of harvest to watermen
 - Way to also track the types of products that are derived from this program?
 - General the type of products
 - Pet food but talked about other things as well - understanding how these fish can be used for wide product development
 - Opportunity to collect data - but this would not happen for free - what does this look like within the legislation?
 - Looks like most money is going to watermen - but is there any grant program going towards science?
 - Allie is working with committee staff to see what this might look like. Discussions are continuing.
 - USGS is another federal entity that can help answer these questions - can use existing or new appropriations
- Question that came up in the May 27th ICW meeting - interest in including zoos and aquariums into this conversation?
 - Question bounced off of the AZA - not something that we thought about previously.
 - Were leaning on keeping it smaller but have been having conversations on what this might look like
 - Would zoos/aquariums buy from the pet manufacturers anyways?
 - Buy from seafood wholesalers directly?
- Collection of data on harvesting
 - Catfish are reported daily and the location they get sent to
 - Can pull this data from VMRC
 - MD has same thing - ability to get info is easy

11:25am - 11:30am

Wrap Up

- Allison wraps up the main points at the end of the meeting:
 - There are lot of questions on what this legislation means for the harvesters - wholesale, where to pick up, how it is processed
 - This will be addressed through the grants
 - Types of things hoping to achieve in terms of science information

- Size distribution
- Biomass
- Economic
- Products
- Open question on how to support science
- Additional recommendations on expansion of flathead and to zoos/aquariums
- **Action Item:** Please provide feedback on recommended price per pound
- send recommendations to Allie by email

11:30am

Adjourn