Chesapeake Bay Program
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
645 Contees Wharf Road, P.O. Box 28, Edgewater, MD 21037
Phone: (410)798-1283 Fax: (410)798-0816
http://www.chesapeake.org/stac/

November 7, 2014

RE: STAC Review of the Final Report of the Sustainable Fisheries GIT Invasive Catfish Task Force.

Nicholas DiPasquale, Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program Management Board
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
410 Severn Avenue, Suite 109
Annapolis, MD 21403

Cc: Management Board; Sustainable Fisheries GIT; Invasive Catfish Task Force.

Dear Mr. DiPasquale,

Please see the attached STAC review report entitled, "Review of the Final Report of the Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team Invasive Catfish Task Force." This report is a result of the March 2014 Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team request to the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee for an independent peer review of the Invasive Catfish Task Force draft report. The fact that the report was released prior to any of the requested input from STAC is of concern to me and the committee. This places STAC in the position of appearing to critique rather than guide and that is clearly not our preference. In the future, it will be most helpful if a STAC review precedes finalization of reports and submittal to the Management Board.

STAC assembled a team of seven professionals with backgrounds in the control and management of invasive fishes, fish biology, estuarine ecology, and resource economics to review the ICTF report. A portion of the reviewers' findings and recommendations are summarized in the remainder of this letter.

Due to the high level of uncertainty associated with many of the recommendations, reviewers advocate for the development of a comprehensive management plan prior to implementation of recommendations. A comprehensive plan would detail specific actions needed to fulfill the objectives, establish roles and responsibilities across jurisdictions, provide a framework to more fully evaluate control techniques, and prioritize actions and research needs. Reviewers and the ICTF identified scientific gaps that, if addressed, could help minimize uncertainty and increase

the likelihood that management objectives could be met. Information needs include: population size and distribution; movement information and population modeling of the very large fish of interest to the trophy fishery; removal rates needed to elicit a response in the system; gear effectiveness; and fish contaminant levels. Consumption advisories for invasive catfish may be warranted for select tributaries which may conflict with the expansion of the commercial fishery or limit the willingness of jurisdictions to promote an expansion. Research efforts currently underway (e.g., pilot study of commercial electrofishing on blue catfish) will add to the knowledge base and should be considered during the development of a management plan.

We hope the Sustainable Fisheries GIT finds the results of the review to be useful as the goal team moves forward in their attempt to control this invasive species and in development of a comprehensive management plan, and STAC looks forward to your feedback. STAC respectfully requests a written response to the review findings and recommendations from the CBP Management Board Chair by Friday, January 7, 2015.

Please direct any questions you may have about this report and its recommendations to Natalie Gardner, the Chesapeake Bay Program's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee Coordinator, and lead reviewers, Dr. Donna Marie Bilkovic of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and Dr. Tom Ihde of the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Program Office.

On behalf of the entire STAC, thank you again for considering these recommended next steps, and we look forward to working with you closely on this in the future.

Sincerely,

Kirk Havens
Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee