

HB0947/273129/1

BY: Environment and Transportation Committee

AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 947
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in the sponsor line, strike “**and Szeliga**” and substitute “**Szeliga, Boyce, Grammer, Healey, and Holmes**”; in line 2, strike “**Department of**”; in the same line, strike “**Commercial**” and substitute “**Invasive**”; in the same line, strike “**and Flathead**”; in line 3, strike “**Finfish Trotline License**” and substitute “**Pilot Program**”; strike beginning with “commercial” in line 4 down through “gear” in line 5 and substitute “**Invasive Blue Catfish Pilot Program to include the Blue Catfish Gill Net Program**”; in line 6, strike “commercial blue and flathead catfish finfish trotline license” and substitute “**Invasive Blue Catfish Pilot Program**”; strike line 8 in its entirety and substitute “**Chapter 171 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2025**”; strike in their entirety lines 9 through 11, inclusive; and after line 11, insert:

“BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Chapter 172 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2025”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 1, after line 13, insert:

“Chapter 171 of the Acts of 2025

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

(a) The Department of Natural Resources, in coordination with the Invasive Catfish Advisory Committee, shall establish the Invasive Blue Catfish Pilot Program.

(b) The purpose of the Pilot Program is to curb the spread of the invasive blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

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(c) The Pilot Program consists of:

(1) the For-Hire/Commercial Blue Catfish Program;

(2) the Mid- and Lower-Bay Blue Catfish Trotline Program; [and]

(3) **THE BLUE CATFISH GILL NET PROGRAM; AND**

[(3)] (4) any other program that the Department determines to be effective in curbing the spread of blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

(d) (1) Under the For-Hire/Commercial Blue Catfish Program, the Department may:

(i) authorize eligible participants to run for-hire and commercial fishing trips simultaneously; and

(ii) make any regulatory or administrative changes it believes will increase the commercial harvest of blue catfish.

(2) (i) Under the Mid- and Lower-Bay Blue Catfish Trotline Program, the Department shall authorize the use of finfish trotlines south of the William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial Bridge to the maximum extent feasible to harvest blue catfish.

(ii) The Department may restrict the areas south of the William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial Bridge where finfish trotlines may be used to harvest blue catfish based on potential bycatch, user conflicts, or other issues it considers relevant.

(e) In implementing the Pilot Program, the Department shall consider for the harvest of blue catfish:

(1) authorizing the use of electrofishing;

(2) authorizing the use of finfish trotlines of up to 2,400 feet in length;

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(3) eliminating any limits on the number of hooks used on a finfish trotline; and

(4) authorizing the use of hooks that are not corrodible.

(f) The Department shall:

(1) expand the use of practices determined to be effective under the Pilot Program throughout the duration of the Pilot Program; and

(2) continue to implement and update the Pilot Program until the termination date of this Act.

(g) On or before December 1, [2025] 2026, AND EACH DECEMBER 1 THEREAFTER, the Department shall report to the [Governor] SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT and THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, [the General Assembly] on [its] THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PILOT PROGRAM DURING THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING YEAR, INCLUDING findings and recommendations under the Pilot Program.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety, has been passed by a yea and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from the date it is enacted. It shall remain effective through June 30, [2026] 2030, and, at the end of June 30, [2026] 2030, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Chapter 172 of the Acts of 2025

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

(Over)

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(a) The Department of Natural Resources, in coordination with the Invasive Catfish Advisory Committee, shall establish the Invasive Blue Catfish Pilot Program.

(b) The purpose of the Pilot Program is to curb the spread of the invasive blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

(c) The Pilot Program consists of:

(1) the For-Hire/Commercial Blue Catfish Program;

(2) the Mid- and Lower-Bay Blue Catfish Trotline Program; [and]

(3) **THE BLUE CATFISH GILL NET PROGRAM; AND**

[(3)] (4) any other program that the Department determines to be effective in curbing the spread of blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

(d) (1) Under the For-Hire/Commercial Blue Catfish Program, the Department may:

(i) authorize eligible participants to run for-hire and commercial fishing trips simultaneously; and

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(2) (i) Under the Mid- and Lower-Bay Blue Catfish Trotline Program, the Department shall authorize the use of finfish trotlines south of the William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial Bridge to the maximum extent feasible to harvest blue catfish.

(ii) The Department may restrict the areas south of the William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial Bridge where finfish trotlines may be used to harvest blue catfish based on potential bycatch, user conflicts, or other issues it considers relevant.

(e) In implementing the Pilot Program, the Department shall consider for the harvest of blue catfish:

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- (1) authorizing the use of electrofishing;
- (2) authorizing the use of finfish trotlines of up to 2,400 feet in length;
- (3) eliminating any limits on the number of hooks used on a finfish trotline; and
- (4) authorizing the use of hooks that are not corrodible.

(f) The Department shall:

(1) expand the use of practices determined to be effective under the Pilot Program throughout the duration of the Pilot Program; and

(2) continue to implement and update the Pilot Program until the termination date of this Act.

(g) On or before December 1, [2025] 2026, AND EACH DECEMBER 1 THEREAFTER, the Department shall report to the [Governor] SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT and THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, [the General Assembly] on [its] THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PILOT PROGRAM DURING THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING YEAR, INCLUDING findings and recommendations under the Pilot Program.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety, has been passed by a yea and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from the date it is enacted. It shall remain effective through June 30, [2026] 2030, and, at the end of June 30, [2026] 2030, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.”.

On pages 1 and 2, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with line 14 on page 1 through line 15 on page 2, inclusive.