Meeting of the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission
April 17, 2025
Summary of Actions and Motions

Commissioners in Attendance: Vice-Chair Robert T. Brown, Rachel Dean, Russell Dize, Rachel Fazenbaker, Sonny Gwin, Chair Steve Lay, Jeff Pharis, Bill Rice, Bill Scerbo, Bill Sieling, David M. Sutherland.

Commissioners Absent and Not Represented: Brandon Malec, Brian Nesspor, Bubby Powley.

Staff Participating: Lynn Fegley, Paul Genovese, Lieutenant Kevin Kelly, Jacob Holtz, Sarah Widman, Carrie Kennedy, Michael Luisi, Tony Prochaska.

Other Participants, Public Comment and Remote Total: Jeffrey Roberts with Brandt Information Systems, Rachael Gilde with the Maryland Port Authority, Angie Sowers with the US Army Corps of Engineers and a high of 31 individuals observed online at any given time.

Actions:

- 3,000 commercial watermen have not submitted a harvest report since September of 2024, this is estimated to represent over 50% of all harvesters. 1,131 commercial crabbers have not submitted any reports for 2024, they need to submit now. The department cannot do its job of managing the fisheries (well) without this information from the commercial sector. Please do what you can to let us know what you catch and encourage others to do the same. The electronic reporting system users are not included among the nonreporters. Thank you to the commission for the suggestions given on how to improve commercial reporting rates.
- The commission will vote on its officers during the July meeting, please be prepared (this is an annual requirement). Current chair is Steve Lay and Vice-Chair is Robert T. Brown, officers can serve consecutive terms with no limits.
- Commissioner Pharis suggested to the NRP that the trainees go out with commercial watermen for a ride along, to learn how the watermen operate and give the trainees a deeper understanding of industry. Lt. Kelly will bring the suggestion to his leadership.
- The annual Penalty Workgroup meeting will be held soon, expect an email, staff is looking at mid June. Current TFAC members include Robert T. Brown, Bill Sieling, Bill Scerbo and Rachel Fazenbaker, four commissioners from SFAC will also be involved.
- The department requests comment from the commission on fisheries-related items it is currently scoping and proposing. Please review your handouts and send your comments to Jacob Holtz (jacob.holtz@maryland.gov). Additionally, the items reviewed during the meeting will be posted on the department website requesting public comment, please share with your constituents.
- Commissioners should expect an email from the department concerning the proposed regulation that would create a no-cost declaration of intent for shellfish dealers who purchase oysters or clams for human consumption. The email will clarify whether or not those purchasing from a dealer (for retail purposes) will also be required to declare.

- Please review the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Winter Meeting (Feb. 4-5, 2025) information for agenda items. Spiny dogfish, horseshoe crab, and striped bass are the species in which actions may be taken.
- Based upon a discussion surrounding the Mid Bay Restoration Project, Rachael Gilde with the Maryland Port Authority will share the reef plan, once it is better developed, with the commission for its feedback, stay tuned.
- The department stated it was against harvesting clams from restricted areas for the bait industry, due to human health concerns. The commission requested this topic be thoroughly discussed at a future meeting before the department makes a decision. The department agreed to take part in a discussion on this topic at the next commission meeting.
- The Blue Crab Advisory Committee will work through the boat day off topic as it relates to commercial crabbing before moving a recommendation to the commission. There are some details to work through before a decision is made on whether or not scope a change in the current regulation. As the regulation stands, the vessel must take off the day of the vessel's owner, so if a vessel is jointly owned and they take off alternating days - they must currently take off two days. DNR Response: *If anyone would like to work with staff to come up with a formula to present to the committee before it meets, please contact the department, it would save a lot of time during the committee meeting.* Rachel Dean stated she supplied the department with language to kick off the discussion.

Motions:

- *Commission approves January 23, 2025 meeting actions and motions.* Motion by Bill Rice, seconded by Bill Scerbo. Vote: No objections. Approved.

Awareness:

- Katherine (Kate) Charbonneau, formally from the Maryland Critical Area Commission, is the Assistant Secretary for Aquatics Since January 2025. Kate brings 19 years of experience with the state to the position. Kate can be reached at kathrine.charbonneau@maryland.gov.
- Maryland Outdoors, the state's new licensing system under development, was presented by Jeff Roberts with Brandt Information Systems (vendor developing system). Commissioners are encouraged to submit questions and suggestions for the system, contact Paul (paul.genovese@maryland.gov). Will come back in the future as new features are unveiled.
- For inquiries on the Mid-Chesapeake Bay Restoration Project please contact Rachael Gilde with the Maryland Port Administration (rgilde@marylarndports.com). The presentation is included with the meeting presentations file located online.
- The NRP received approximately 1,200 applicants for its next recruiting class which is set to begin academy training on June 25. This number has been drawn down to 125 and interviews and polygraphs are now being conducted which may bring the number of applicants to about 65 individuals. Then, those remaining will be interviewed by senior staff. The goal is to fill about 18 positions in addition to possibly a few unexpected vacancies in the recent months. There will be approximately nine new cadets and nine laterals (those coming from other agencies).
- Concerning US Wind, fisheries compensation mitigation, and meetings related to the topic, go to https://dnr.maryland.gov/ccs/Pages/fisheries-compensatory-mitigation.aspx. A thank you from Commissioner Gwin to the department and Michale Luisi for all the work that was done on behalf of the coastal commercial fisheries.
- Assistant Secretary Charbonneau presented FABS budget information: FABS total published budget for FY26 is $39.4 million, FY25 was $33 million. Some of this total budget includes federal funds and a good part of the increase is due to the influx of grants, including for oyster restoration. Federal funds via Sport Fish Restoration continue to make up roughly 10% of the unit's budget. As of now, changes to the federal

funding stream are not anticipated as it is supported (nationwide) by manufacturers' excise taxes on sport fishing equipment, import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats, and the portion of the gasoline fuel tax attributable to small engines and motorboats.
    - There may be potential significant impacts to NOAA's budget, this is being monitored and the department is staying in touch with its NOAA partners. If there are changes that impact fisheries and our fisheries-related industries, including stock assessments and surveys related to Maryland, the department will share that information.
- No motions from the Invasive Catfish Advisory Committee were presented to the commission.
- The Chair gave a quick update on the salmon farm in Cecil County, please contact Steve Lay if you have questions on the proposed farm. Robert T. Brown announced the Maryland Watermen's Association is not in favor of the Salmon farm possibly operating in Maryland.

Meeting Recording:

- https://archive.org/details/meeting-of-the-tidal-fisheries-advisory-commission-2025-04-17-12-48-edt-recording

Next Scheduled Meeting Date:

- July 17, 2025 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Chesapeake Bay Program

Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

Beyond 2025 Revision DRAFT

Released for PUBLIC FEEDBACK July 1 – September 1, 2025

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ABOUT REVISIONS TO THE AGREEMENT

Since the Chesapeake Bay Program's foundation in 1983, its partners have used written agreements to guide the restoration of the nation's largest estuary and its watershed. Setting goals and tracking progress holds partners accountable for their work, while updating agreements over time ensures that goals are aligned with the best available science to attain restoration success. In December 2024, the Chesapeake Executive Council directed the Principals' Staff Committee to revise the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* and propose a simplified and streamlined structure and process for the Chesapeake Bay Program. While structure and process revisions are ongoing, the partnership has evaluated the *Watershed Agreement's* current goals and outcomes based on the latest policy, community needs, best available science, emerging threats and new opportunities. Working with the Principals' Staff Committee, Management Board and subject matter experts, the 10 goals and 31 outcomes of the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* were consolidated, reduced, updated, removed, replaced or revised to create the proposed four goals and 21 outcomes presented in this document, the draft *Revised 2025 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC FEEDBACK PERIOD

From July 1–September 1, 2025, the public is invited to provide written feedback on the proposed updates to the *Revised 2025 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.* You are encouraged to read the Frequently Asked Questions on the Planning for 2025 and Beyond website before submitting your feedback to comments@chesapeakebay.net.

When submitting feedback, you are encouraged to do the following:

- Feedback should be as specific as possible, detailing how you would like to see these sections, goals or outcomes revised.
- Please include the sections and page numbers of the *Watershed Agreement* that you are commenting on. For example, your feedback could be categorized as pertaining to the Vision, Preamble, Principles or a specific Outcome.
- You are encouraged to indicate the state (or D.C.) that you reside in when you submit your feedback so we may share it with your state's representatives to the partnership. If your comments are in reference to a particular state or D.C. and not the entire watershed or agreement, we ask that you indicate that in your feedback as well.
- You are **highly encouraged** to submit your feedback as early as possible and not wait until September 1.
- All feedback received will be posted on the Planning for 2025 and Beyond website, with comments from individuals shared anonymously, unless you specify otherwise. Feedback from organizations, agencies or businesses will be shared as it is received, with identifying information and affiliations.
- All feedback will be read, categorized and reviewed by a 12-person team representing the federal and state agencies and advisory committees that make up the Chesapeake Bay Program. A revised draft of the updated *Watershed Agreement* will be presented to the Management Board in October 2025.

VISION

The Chesapeake Bay Program partners envision an environmentally and economically sustainable and resilient Chesapeake Bay watershed with clean water, abundant life, conserved and healthy working lands, a vibrant cultural heritage and a wide range of engaged individuals whose communities enjoy access to the waters and natural landscapes of the region.

PREAMBLE

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is one of the most extraordinary places in America, spanning six states and the District of Columbia. As the nation's largest and one of the most productive estuaries in the world, the Chesapeake Bay and its vast network of more than 180,000 miles of streams, creeks and rivers holds tremendous ecological, cultural, economic, historic and recreational value for the more than 18 million people who live, work and play in the region.

To restore, conserve and protect this national treasure, the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership was formed in 1983 when the governors of Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, the mayor of the District of Columbia, the chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency signed the first *Chesapeake Bay Agreement*. That initial *Bay Agreement* recognized the "historical decline of living resources" in the Chesapeake Bay and committed to a cooperative approach to "fully address the extent, complexity and sources of pollutants entering the Bay." For more than 40 years, this regional partnership has been recognized as one of the nation's premier estuarine restoration, conservation and protection efforts, implementing policies, engaging in scientific investigation and coordinating actions among the states, the District of Columbia and the federal government.

The Chesapeake Bay Program partners have made much progress in that time, and there is still more to do—especially in the face of continued challenges such as changes in population, loss of farm and forest lands, declining fish and wildlife resources, threats to biodiversity, emerging contaminants and changing environmental conditions. Through the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, the partnership remains committed to restoring, protecting and conserving the Bay and its watershed through effort based in and guided by science and responsive to the lessons learned from our past and shared experiences.

One of the most important lessons the partners have learned from the past four decades is that although watershed-wide partnerships can help to coordinate and catalyze progress, implementation is locally inspired and driven. Local governments, tribes, communities, businesses, watershed groups and other nongovernmental organizations are key partners in our work. Working together to engage, empower and facilitate these partner networks will leverage resources and ensure better outcomes for all watershed communities.

The partnership's experience with watershed restoration, conservation and protection efforts has shown that measurable progress, coupled with clear accountability, yield the most effective results. The partnership continues to embrace new ideas, technologies and policies that will help meet our goals. We are committed to improving accountability, transparency and outreach to strengthen and increase public confidence in our work.

The *1983 Chesapeake Bay Agreement* laid the foundation for a cooperative program that included four jurisdictions along with the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the federal government. Since 2014, the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* has included all seven jurisdictions in the watershed, with New York, West Virginia and Delaware joining the original signatories as full partners in the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Executive Council. Numerous federal agencies also continue their longstanding commitment to restoring, conserving and protecting the Chesapeake Bay.

This *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* acknowledges that the partnership cannot address every issue at once and that progress must be made in a strategic manner, focusing on efforts that will achieve

the most meaningful and cost-effective results. Watershed restoration, conservation and protection are integral drivers of the region's economy, health and culture. To that end, the partnership is committed to achieving success while maximizing the community and economic benefits across the watershed. The signatories to this voluntary agreement commit to achieving the restoration, conservation and protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, its water, habitats and living resources for the benefit of all people living in and visiting this nationally treasured watershed.

PRINCIPLES

The Chesapeake Bay Program commits to operate under the following principles, which reflect the partners' collective, core values. The principles guide the work of the partnership as we develop policy and take action to achieve the C*hesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's* Goals and Outcomes.

The partnership will:

- **Collaborate** to achieve the Goals and Outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.
- **Achieve Goals and Outcomes** in a measurable and timely way and at the least possible cost to the public.
- **Represent the interests of all communities** throughout the watershed fairly and effectively.
- **Use place-based approaches**, where appropriate, to target specific geographic areas and produce recognizable benefits to local communities while contributing to larger ecosystem goals.
- **Acknowledge, support and embrace local governments** and other local entities in watershed restoration, conservation and protection activities.
- **Operate with transparency** in program decisions, policies, actions and reporting on progress to strengthen public trust and confidence in our efforts.
- **Use science-based decision-making, consider Indigenous and local knowledge and seek out innovative technologies and approaches** to support sound management decisions in a changing system.
- **Maintain and enhance a coordinated watershed-wide monitoring and research program** to support decision-making, track progress and assess the effectiveness of management actions.
- **Anticipate and respond to changing conditions,** including long-term trends in sea level, temperature, precipitation, land use and other variables.
- **Adaptively manage** at all levels of the partnership to foster continuous improvement informed by the best available science and strong working relationships.
- **Seek consensus across the partnership** when making decisions.
- **Meaningfully engage the public** to foster collaboration and grow the partnership to support and carry out the restoration, conservation and protection activities necessary to achieve the Goals and Outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.
- **Integrate tribal nations into the partnership** in a manner that appropriately considers their unique status as independent sovereign nations.
- **Integrate social science holistically throughout the partnership** to better understand and measure how human behavior can drive natural resource use, management and decision-making.
- **Facilitate outreach to and welcome participation by all communities** regarding the partnership's activities, decisions and implementation of this *Watershed Agreement*.

GOALS & OUTCOMES

The commitments contained in this section are the Goals and Outcomes that the signatories will work on collectively to advance restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and its watershed. The Goals articulate the desired high-level aspects of the partners' Vision. The Outcomes related to each Goal are specific, time-bound, measurable targets that directly contribute to achieving that Goal.

The Management Strategies, further described in the next section of this *Watershed Agreement*, articulate the actions necessary to achieve the Goals and Outcomes. This work will require effort from many, including all levels of government, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, watershed groups, businesses and individuals. Local governments will continue to play a unique and critical role in helping the partnership realize this shared Vision for the Chesapeake Bay. Signatories will participate in achieving the Outcomes of this *Watershed Agreement* in the manner described in the "Management Strategies Development and Implementation" section.

While the Goals and Outcomes are described by separate topic areas, the signatories recognize that they are interrelated. Improvements in habitat and water quality lead to healthier living resources. Environmentally literate people are more engaged stewards of the Chesapeake Bay's healthy watersheds. Better water quality means swimmable, fishable waters for Bay residents and visitors. Increased public access to the Bay inspires people to care for critical landscapes and honor the region's heritage and culture. Healthy fish and shellfish populations support a vibrant economy for a spectrum of fishing-related industries. The signatories recognize that all aspects of the ecosystem are connected and that these Goals and Outcomes support the health and the protection of the entire Bay watershed.

As the signatories identify new opportunities and concerns, Goals or Outcomes may be adopted or modified. Any changes or additions to Goals will be approved by the Executive Council. The Principals' Staff Committee will approve changes or additions to Outcomes, although significant changes or additions will be raised to the Executive Council for approval. Proposed changes to Goals and Outcomes or the addition of new ones will be open for public input before being finalized. Final changes or additions will be available on the Chesapeake Bay Program's website.

THRIVING HABITAT AND WILDLIFE

The fisheries of the Chesapeake Bay watershed are the backbone of the region's ecology, economy and heritage. However, impaired water quality, invasive species and habitat loss place pressure on fish and wildlife populations across the region. Meanwhile, our increasing use of land and resources can fragment and degrade the habitats they depend on. Maintaining sustainable fisheries and restoring habitat for native and migratory species will support a strong economy and a balanced ecosystem.

GOAL: Protect, restore and sustain fisheries and wildlife, as well as the network of land and water habitats they depend on, to promote a balanced and resilient ecosystem and support local economies and recreational opportunities.

Blue Crab Sustainability

Achieve a sustainable Bay-wide blue crab fishery through cross jurisdictional coordination that supports healthy blue crab populations and thriving fishing communities.

- Continually maintain abundance and harvest rate targets as determined by the 2026 benchmark stock assessment.
- Achieve cross-jurisdictional coordination by jointly evaluating and communicating stock status annually through the Blue Crab Advisory Report and refining targets, as needed, through the next stock assessment.

Oysters

Increase ecosystem benefits from oysters through reef habitat restoration, sustainable harvest and aquaculture.

- Restore or conserve at least 1,800 additional acres of oyster reef habitat concentrated primarily in restoration focus areas to provide ecosystem service benefits.
- Maintain sustainable oyster abundance through oyster fisheries and aquaculture practices.
- Maintain reefs established under the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* to achieve restoration success metrics.

Fish Habitat

Achieve and maintain suitable shallow water fish habitat in tidal and non-tidal areas for key species through focused water quality, conservation and restoration improvements informed by a synthesis of fisheries science and habitat assessments.

- Continually improve the quantity and quality of shallow water fish habitat in tidal areas above baseline conditions as determined by a Bay-wide assessment of fish habitat conditions completed in 2026.
- Increase the consideration of forage species in fishery management decision-making for key predators by annually developing reports of prey status as good, uncertain or poor.
- Establish a baseline and assess the overall condition and suitability of fish habitat in the watershed to support healthy communities and inform effective restoration, conservation and management actions.
- Develop an acid mine drainage target, in collaboration with the Brook Trout Outcome, that strives to better understand the impacts and mitigation opportunities for acid mine drainage throughout the watershed.

- Develop freshwater mussel conservation plans for five tributaries and begin implementation by 2035.

Wetlands

Restore, create, enhance and protect wetlands to support people and living resources, including waterbirds and fish, provide water quality, flood and erosion protection, recreation and other valuable benefits to people.

- **Tidal Wetlands Target**: Restore or create 1,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres by 2035.
- **Non-Tidal Wetlands Target**: Restore or create 2,000 acres and enhance 15,000 acres by 2035.
- **Buffer Protection Target**: Same as the Protected Lands Outcome and will be tracked under that Outcome.
- Waterbirds represent wetlands functioning at its highest level; priorities for specific species will be developed over the next 12 to 18 months.

Stream Health

Continually improve and protect local stream health and function, including their living resources and ecosystem services throughout the watershed using the best available science to inform land management, planning and conservation.

- Improve health and ecological integrity of at least 3% of non-tidal stream miles every six years.

Brook Trout

Protect and enhance brook trout within the Chesapeake Bay watershed by increasing occupancy, abundance and resilience to changing environmental conditions.

- By 2035, increase brook trout occupancy by 1% in watersheds supporting healthy populations while achieving no net loss in other watersheds.
- By 2035, increase abundance at 10 long-term monitoring sites.
- By 2035, reduce identified threats by _XX_ % to increase brook trout resilience in watersheds supporting healthy populations.

Fish Passage

Improve habitat and water quality, while creating more resilient and sustainable populations of fish and other aquatic organisms by removing barriers throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed's coastal and freshwater rivers and streams.

- Restore passage and connectivity to at least 150 miles of aquatic habitat every two years.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)

Sustain and increase the habitat and ecosystem benefits of SAV in the Chesapeake Bay. Achieve and sustain the outcome of 196,000 acres of SAV Bay-wide, which is necessary for a restored Bay.

- Progress toward this Outcome will be measured against interim targets of 90,000 acres by 2030 and 95,000 acres by 2035.
- Progress will also be measured against the following targets for each salinity zone:
  - Tidal Fresh: 21,330 acres
  - Low Salinity: 13,094 acres
  - Medium Salinity: 126,032 acres
  - High Salinity: 35,790 acres

CLEAN WATER

Clean water is the foundation of healthy fisheries, habitats and communities across the watershed. However, excess nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and toxic contaminants can degrade our waterways, harm wildlife and pose risks to human health. The Chesapeake Bay Program partners use a variety of tools to reduce excess nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment, address toxic contaminants and monitor progress toward achieving water quality standards.

GOAL: Reduce pollutants entering the Bay and its rivers to achieve the water quality necessary to support aquatic wildlife and protect human health.

Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring

Measure changing water quality conditions by maintaining core monitoring networks, evaluating attainment of established water quality standards (i.e., dissolved oxygen, clarity and chlorophyll-a) in the Bay and strengthening scientific understanding and communication of patterns in nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and other parameters throughout the Bay and watershed.

- **Maintain Monitoring Networks**: Annually, maintain full core monitoring network operations to support analysis and communication of water quality loads, water quality trends and water quality standards attainment
- **Develop Methods for Water Quality Standards Attainment**: Develop and expand partnership-approved approaches to support assessment of all dissolved oxygen, clarity and chlorophyll a criteria in all designated uses using all available data. For dissolved oxygen criteria assessment, have methods established and approved by 2028 and applied in reporting by the end of 2030.
- **Evaluate Water Quality Standards Attainment**: Through management actions in support of the Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment Outcome, maintain a long-term trend of improvement in the water quality standards attainment indicator at a rate of at least 0.2% per year, aligned with the historical baseline trend of the multi-metric water quality standards indicator between 1985 and 2022. Update the water quality standards attainment indicator annually.
- **Calculate Water Quality Loads and Trends**:
    - Watershed: In coordination with the Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment Outcome, compute and communicate loads and trends in nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment for the watershed. On an annual basis produce the load and trend analyses and communication results for the nine major river system river input monitoring sites. Conduct the same analysis for the complete non-tidal network on a biennial basis.
    - Tidal Bay and tidal tributaries: On an annual basis for the tidal Bay and tributary stations, compute and communicate trends for physical, chemical and biological measures.

Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Sediment

Implement and maintain practices and controls that will reduce excess nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment to support living resources and protect human health by achieving water quality standards.

- Through 2030, continue to implement and maintain practices and controls to reduce excess nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment to achieve the interim water quality targets as determined by the Principals' Staff Committee. Partners may meet this target by implementing their Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans, two-year milestone commitments or other innovative strategies.
- By December 2030, update this outcome with revised targets that include a timeline to meet the updated water quality targets for nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment.
- Demonstrate net reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment toward meeting the interim water quality targets as determined by the Principals' Staff Committee, through multiple lines of

evidence, including annual progress reporting and monitoring data (in coordination with the Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring Outcome).

Toxic Contaminants Mitigation

Reduce the amount and effect of toxic contaminants, such as PCBs, plastics, mercury and PFAS, on the waters, lands, living resources and communities of the Chesapeake Bay watershed by facilitating an increased understanding of their impacts and mitigation options.

- Promote continuous information sharing between researchers, program managers and policymakers on the lessons learned, best practices and most up-to-date science, policy and communications around the toxic contaminants impacting the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

HEALTHY LANDSCAPES

The well-being of the Chesapeake Bay depends on the health of the lands that make up its watershed. As communities within the region continue to grow, the demand for land and resources can put our waters and habitats at risk. Sound land use management and conservation of areas with ecological, historic and cultural value can reduce pollution, maintain healthy ecosystems and ensure the health of forests, farms and open spaces, all while supporting growing economies. These cost-effective strategies will help communities adapt to changing environmental conditions and ensure clean water for future generations.

GOAL: Conserve, restore and enhance landscapes of ecological, economic and cultural value to maintain water quality, provide habitat for wildlife and increase resilience.

Protected Lands

Protect critical landscapes within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to protect water quality, enhance biodiversity, support sustainable livelihoods, ensure military readiness and national defense, and honor cultural heritage.

- **Protected Lands:** By 2040, permanently protect an additional 1.5-2 million acres of land throughout the watershed at the federal, state or local level.
- **Forests:** By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of forest, of which XX% are in riparian areas.
- **Wetlands**: By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of wetlands, focusing on the protection of buffer zones.
- **Watershed Health**: By 2040, protect a total of _XX_ acres of natural lands in watersheds that support good stream health.
- **Tribal Lands:** Support the sovereignty and duty of care of tribal nations and communities by securing protection status and/or co-management agreements for a total of _XX_ acres of tribal homelands.
- **Agricultural Lands:** By 2040, permanently protect a total of_XX_ acres of agricultural lands within the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- **Community Greenspace:** By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of community greenspace.

Land Use Decision Support

Develop and disseminate relevant and actionable land use information to organizations and communities involved in local and regional land use planning on past, present and future conditions, and the potential environmental and socioeconomic consequences of changing conditions.

- Continually increase the number, variety and/or geographic scope of use cases (e.g., watershed protection, aquatic connectivity, stormwater, tree canopy, stream health or redevelopment) for landscape information.
- Highlight two use cases annually to showcase best practices and share this information with local planning officials and partners through Story Maps and/or other communication products.
- Promote land use data and tool applications that maintain the ecological integrity of watersheds supporting good stream health and address the needs of local communities.

Healthy Forests and Trees

Conserve and restore forests and tree cover to maximize benefits for water quality, habitat and people throughout the watershed, with a particular focus on riparian areas and communities.

- **Tree Canopy**: Reduce the loss of existing canopy, and plant and maintain 35,000 acres of community trees by 2035 to achieve a net gain in canopy over the long-term.
- **Forest Buffers**: Reduce the loss of existing buffers, and plant and maintain 7,500 acres of forest buffers annually to achieve no less than 71% riparian forest cover by 2035 and 75% riparian forest cover over the long-term.
- **Forest Conservation**: Reduce the loss of existing forests to development through planning and conservation, and plant and maintain _XX_ acres of new forests by 2035 to achieve a net gain in forests over the long-term.

Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions

Increase the capacity for pursuing nature-based solutions to improve planning and response to changing conditions while balancing long-term resiliency of watershed communities, economies and ecosystems.

- By 2040, at least seven subwatershed areas have benefited from knowledge-sharing and technical assistance to identify adaptation options with nature-based solutions. These solutions include restoration and protection projects that will help address risks to people, infrastructure and habitats from changes in temperature, precipitation and landscapes.
- By 2040, workgroup activities will inform and lead to an increase in the implementation of adaptation strategies that integrate nature-based solutions in the above subwatershed areas.

ENGAGED COMMUNITIES

The long-term success of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort depends on individuals and communities throughout the watershed understanding their connection to the local environment and making choices that support its health. Stewardship begins with increasing access to outdoor recreation, providing learning opportunities to students, adults and job seekers, and empowering local decision-makers to support conservation actions.

GOAL: Engage and grow a community of local stewards and leaders through education, recreation and professional opportunities.

Stewardship

Increase public participation in stewardship actions that contribute positively to the lands, waters, living resources and communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

- Through 2040, better equip practitioners with the social science data, technical assistance and support needed to develop, improve and carry out individual and community-level stewardship programs, including those that will help advance *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* Goals and Outcomes.

Local Leadership

Continually increase the knowledge and capacity of local government leaders to empower them to make decisions and implement local actions that support the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

- Increase the percentage of local government leaders reporting water resource management actions biennially.

Workforce

Increase the ability of all job seekers in the watershed to understand, participate in and succeed in environmental career pathways.

- **Understanding**: By 2035, inform and grow implementation of strategies that help students, educators and job seekers to become aware of and understand environmental careers and the pathways to them.
- **Participating**: By 2035, increase the number of post-secondary institutions and training providers offering industry-recognized credentials that support *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* Goals and Outcomes.
- **Succeeding**: By 2035, inform and support greater hiring and retention of workers trained in fields necessary to support *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* Goals and Outcomes.

Public Access

Enhance new and existing public access sites to the Bay and its tributaries through a combination of actions aimed at improving recreational opportunities and accessibility while addressing barriers to access by increasing the number, quality and geographic distribution of sites.

- **New Access Sites**: By 2040, add 100 new public access sites with a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for recreation where feasible.
- **Improving ADA/ABA Accessibility**: By 2040, improve 3% of existing public water access sites by adding ADA/ABA accessible features, where feasible, to meet the needs of communities.

- **Access Upgrades, Maintenance and Expansion**: By 2040, improve at least 100 existing public water access sites by upgrading or maintaining site grounds and structures—including signage, parking, seating and public facilities—and expanding the range of active and passive recreation opportunities, such as kayaking, boating, trails, courts, piers, wildlife viewing and picnic areas.
- **Expanding Access to Urban Lands**: By 2040, expand access to _XX_% of urban lands and community green spaces identified in the Protected Lands data set. An initial baseline study is to be conducted by 2025-2026 to determine appropriate numeric targets for this metric.

Student Experiences

Continually increase the number of students who participate in inquiry-based environmental literacy instruction working towards at least one Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) in each elementary, middle and high school.

- By 2040, state targets are reached that result in 75% of public-school students being enrolled in a school district that offers a MWEE for all students.

School District Planning

Continually increase the number of school districts that have policies and practices in place that support environmental education and sustainable schools.

- By 2040, all jurisdictions reach their target for the number of school districts that are well prepared to deliver a comprehensive and systemic approach to environmental literacy.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Within X timeframe *(previously "one year")* of the revision of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, the Chesapeake Bay Program's Goal Implementation Teams will update or develop Management Strategies for the Outcomes that support the Goals of this *Watershed Agreement*. These strategies outline the means for accomplishing each Outcome as well as monitoring, assessing and reporting progress and coordinating actions among partners and stakeholders as necessary. Management Strategies describe how local governments, Indigenous representatives, nonprofit and private partners are engaged; where actions, tools or technical support are needed to empower local governments and others to do their part; and what steps are necessary to facilitate greater local participation in achieving the Outcome.

Participation in Management Strategies or participating in the achievement of Outcomes varies by signatory based on differing priorities across the watershed. This participation may include commitments, such as: sharing knowledge, data or information, educating the public, working on future legislation, and developing or implementing programs or practices. Management Strategies, which are aimed at implementing Outcomes, identify participating signatories and other stakeholders, including local governments and nonprofit organizations, and will be implemented in X-year *(previously "2-year")* periods.

The signatories and other partners shall thereafter update and/or modify such commitments every X *(previously "2")* years. Specific Management Strategies will be updated in consultation with stakeholders, organizations and other agencies, and will include a period for public input and review prior to final adoption.

Management Strategies may address multiple Outcomes if deemed appropriate. Goal Implementation Teams will re-evaluate with X frequency *(previously "biennially")* and update strategies as necessary, with attention to changing environmental and economic conditions. Partners may identify policy changes to address these conditions and minimize obstacles to achieve the Outcomes.

Stakeholder input will be incorporated into the development and reevaluation of each of the strategies. The Chesapeake Bay Program will continue to make these strategies and reports on progress available to the public in a transparent manner on its websites and through public meetings of the appropriate Goal Implementation Team and Management Board.

The Goal Implementation Teams will submit the Management Strategies to the partnership's Management Board for review. If the Management Board determines that any strategy or plan developed prior to the revision of this *Watershed Agreement* meets the requirements of a Management Strategy as defined above, no new strategy needs to be developed. This includes,

but is not limited to, the strategies and plans for implementing the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load.

	Quarter 1 (Jan 1 - Mar 31)			
Violation	# Citations	# Warnings	Total	**Most Common Violation:**
Fisheries Regs	57	282	339	Fishing in closed stream during trout closure (102), Failure to possess bay & coastal license while fishing (56)
Fisheries Law	90	500	590	Fish w/o Angler's (Non-Tidal) License (160), Fish w/o Bay & Coastal License (184)
Fishing w/o License	61	284	345	
Striped Bass	3	6	9	Target Striped Bass in Spawning Area March 1-31 (6)
Crabbing	0	23	23	Failure to Remove Bank Trap by Dec. 1 (19)
Oyster	15	25	40	Oystering w/o Rec. License or Reg. (6), Possn. Unculled Oysters Dredged - Commercial (6)
Shark	0	0	0	
Trout	33	242	275	Failure to Obtain Trout Stamp Resident & Non-Resident (127)
Aquaculture	4	1	5	Commercially Harvesting Shellfish Grown or Harvested Under NR 4-11A-17 (2)
Commercial	25	66	91	Failure to Remove Bank Trap by Dec. 1 (19)
	Quarter 2 (April 1 - Jun 30)			
Violation	# Citations	# Warnings	Total	**Most Common Violation:**
Fisheries Regs	367	620	987	FAILURE TO POSSESS CHESAPEAKE BAY & COASTAL SPORT FISHING LICENSE WHILE FISHING (158)
Fisheries Law	187	1111	1298	FISHING W/O SPORT FISHING LICENSE (BAY & COASTAL) OR REQUIRED REGISTRATION (676)
Fishing w/o License	155	925	1080	
Striped Bass	123	51	173	TARGETING STRIPED BASS APRIL 1-MAY 15 (30)
Crabbing	56	150	205	POSSESSION OF FEMALE CRABS RECREATIONAL (53)
Oyster	6	13	19	CATCHING OYSTERS RECREATIONALLY DURING CLOSED SEASON (13)
Shark	0	0	0	
Trout	11	54	64	FAILURE TO OBTAIN TROUT STAMP (41)
Aquaculture	0	0	0	
Commercial	6	30	36	FAILURE TO MARK CRAB GEAR BUOYS WITH COMMERCIAL LICENSE NUMBER (9)
	Quarter 3 (July 1 - Sep 30)			
Violation	# Citations	# Warnings	Total	**Most Common Violation:**
Fisheries Regs				
Fisheries Law				
Fishing w/o License				
Striped Bass				
Crabbing				
Oyster				
Shark				
Trout				
Aquaculture				
Commercial				
	Quarter 4 (Oct 1 - Dec 31)			
Violation	# Citations	# Warnings	Total	**Most Common Violation:**
Fisheries Regs				
Fisheries Law				
Fishing w/o License				
Striped Bass				
Crabbing				
Oyster				
Shark				
Trout				
Aquaculture				
Commercial				

Fishing and Boating Services Regulatory Update

Dates Covered: 4/8/2025 – 7/8/2025

Public Notices Issued

View Public Notices at https://dnr.maryland.gov/Fisheries/Pages/Pub_Notices.aspx

Topic/Species	Title	Date Posted on Website
Blue Crab	Commercial Mature Female Hard Crab Catch Limits – July through December 2025	6/26/25
Blue Crab	Commercial Male Hard Crab Catch Limits – July through December 2025	6/26/25
Blue Crab	Recreational Hard Crab Catch & Possession Limits – July 2025 through June 2026	6/26/25
Horseshoe Crab	Commercial Horseshoe Crab Fishery - Effective 5/19/2025	5/16/25
Shellfish (Oysters & Clams)	Price Paid for Purchasing, Hauling, and Planting Fresh Oyster Shell -Effective April 11, 2025	4/8/25
Shellfish (Oysters & Clams)	2025-2026 Commercial Oyster Rules - Effective 7/4/2025	6/30/25
Shellfish (Oysters & Clams)	2025-2026 Recreational Oyster Rules - Effective 7/4/2025	6/30/25
Shellfish Aquaculture	Application for Shellfish Aquaculture Lease Gear Modification - Lee R. Beauchamp & Matthew R. Holloway #595, Worcester County	6/18/25
Shellfish Aquaculture	Application for Shellfish Aquaculture Lease Gear Modification - Daniel N. Worrell and Shell & Barrel, LLC #597, Worcester County	6/18/25

Topic/Species	Title	Date Posted on Website
Shellfish Aquaculture	Application for Shellfish Aquaculture Lease - Ryan S. Zeinog & Jo-Ann J. Adams #572, Dorchester County	6/12/25
Shellfish Aquaculture	Application to Amend a Shellfish Aquaculture Lease - Green Pearl, LLC & William F. Cockayne #564, Talbot County	5/16/25
Shellfish Aquaculture	Application for Shellfish Aquaculture Leases - John B. Morris, III & John B. Morris, Jr. #570 and #571, St. Mary's County	5/16/25
Shellfish Aquaculture	Application for Shellfish Aquaculture Lease - Wylie M. Abbott, Jr., Jason M. Abbott, Pamela J. Abbott & Kristin N. Abbott, #569, Dorchester County	5/14/25
Shellfish Aquaculture	Application for Shellfish Aquaculture Lease - Coby R. Wilson #553, Talbot County	4/23/25
Shellfish Aquaculture	Application for Shellfish Aquaculture Lease - John B. Horseman #561, Dorchester County	4/8/25
Shellfish Aquaculture	Application for Shellfish Aquaculture Lease - Mary L. Horseman #565, Dorchester County	4/8/25
Spiny Dogfish	Commercial Spiny Dogfish Landing Limits - Effective 5/2/2025	4/29/25
Striped Bass	Closure of the Striped Bass Gill Net Season for the Atlantic Ocean, its Coastal Bays and Their Tributaries - Effective 5/19/2025	5/16/25

Effective Regulations and Regulations Following the APA Process

View Maryland Register at https://dsd.maryland.gov/Pages/MDRegister.aspx

View Regulatory Actions at https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/regulations/changes.aspx

Topic	COMAR	MD Register & Comment Begins	Comment Period Ends	Potential Effective Date (**bold** actual effective date)	Description
Update on Penalty Schedule	08.02.13.03 .05, .08	4/18/25	5/19/25	**7/7/25**	The proposed action updates the Department's recreational, commercial, and charter penalty schedules. These are annual updates made in conjunction with the SFAC/TFAC Joint Penalty Workgroup
Seafood Dealers	08.02.08.09. 12	4/18/25	5/19/25	**7/7/25**	The proposed action creates a no-cost declaration of intent for shellfish dealers who purchase oysters or clams for human consumption to facilitate current reporting and tax payment requirements. This will reduce the reporting burden on dealers who are not purchasing oysters and clams for resale and increase the Department's ability to ensure reporting and tax compliance from those dealers who are.

Topic	COMAR	MD Register & Comment Begins	Comment Period Ends	Potential Effective Date (**bold** actual effective date)	Description
Com. Licenses	08.02.01.05	5/2/25	6/2/25	**7/7/25**	NR §4-701 allows a licensee to convert (downgrade) their unlimited tidal fish license (UTFL) into its individual component authorizations and requires the Department to adjust all authorizations accordingly. The proposed action decreases the UTFL number by 16 and increases the number for FGR, FIN, CB3, CLM, OYH, ODB, and CCTL by 16 each.
Patapsco River – White Water	08.18.01.08	7/11/25	8/11/25	9/15/25	The current section is from Woodstock (Md. Rte. 125) to Glen Artney (Patapsco State Park—Old Dam). The "old dam" mentioned may have referred to Bloede, which was removed several years ago. The new end point will be Gun Road. Gun Road crosses the river and is an easy landmark.

Aquaculture and Commercial Fishing Suspension and Revocation List

View List at https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/pages/regulations/penalty.aspx

Last updated 7/1/2025 — List is provided in a separate document.

Recreational Fishing Suspension and Revocation List

View List at https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/pages/regulations/penalty.aspx

Last updated 7/1/2025 — List is provided in a separate document.

Fishing and Boating Services Regulatory Scoping July 2025

Please review the following possible regulatory changes. The Department is looking for your advice on how to proceed with scoping (i.e., open houses, web feedback only, etc.). The Department's normal process is to scope each topic on the Department's website, through GovDelivery Communications, and on social media (Facebook and X).

This format is consistent with the legislation that became effective July 1, 2019, that requires us to provide information that answers questions (who, what, where, when, and why) to help stakeholders/small businesses understand and comply with a regulatory idea.

A Google comment form will be created for each topic and be available for the comment period.

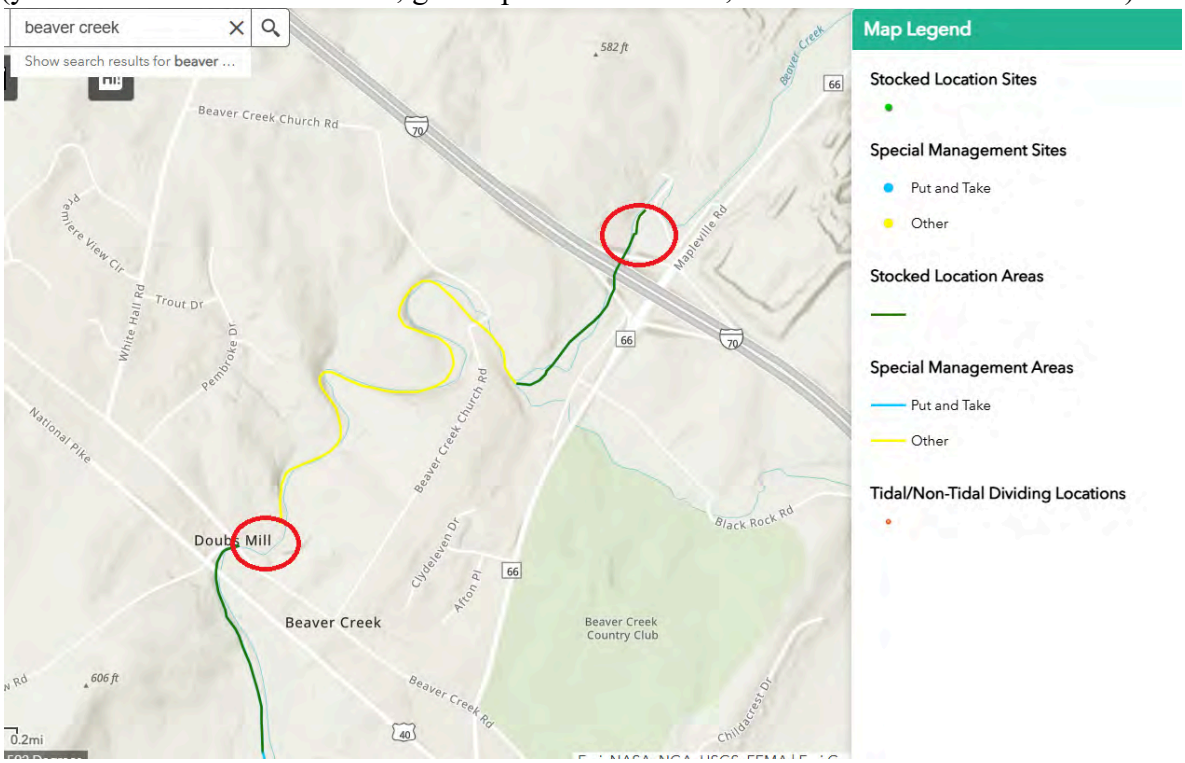
FISHING IN NONTIDAL WATERS - Trout Management Areas in Beaver Creek

What is being considered?
The Department is considering two modifications to trout fishing areas on Beaver Creek in Washington County.

Change #1
First, the Department is considering extending the catch-and-release artificial fly fishing section on Beaver Creek to the downstream side of the bridge at Beaver Creek Road. The current regulation sets the boundary at a red post 0.1 miles upstream from Beaver Creek Road.
COMAR 08.02.11.01C(3)

Change #2
Second, the Department is considering moving the upper boundary of the put-and-take section on Beaver Creek. The current regulation sets the upper boundary as a bridge over a private farm lane located below the Albert Powell State Trout Hatchery. The boundary would be shifted downstream to the upstream side of the I-70W onramp bridge.
COMAR 08.02.11.01B(5)(l)(i)

Map of Changes
(yellow=catch and release area; green=put-and-take area; no color=statewide trout rules)



Why are these changes necessary?
Change #1 Extension of the catch and release artificial fly fishing section.
Currently, there are three sections with different rules on a small section of the creek. Having three separate management areas in such a short distance is confusing for anglers. Extending the catch-and-release artificial fly fishing section will simplify the rules in the area and hopefully reduce confusion about where and when anglers can harvest trout. The change will also protect stocked trout from being harvested during the put-and-take closure period and ensure more trout are available to anglers for opening day.

Change #2 Moving the upper boundary of the put-and-take section.
This is necessary because the upper boundary is currently on private property. That landowner no longer allows public access to their property. Shifting the upper boundary downstream to I-70 would adjust the put-and-take section to areas where public angler access is allowed.

Who will this affect?
This action will affect nontidal anglers that fish Beaver Creek in Washington County.

When will this be effective?
The Department projects that this change could be effective in the spring of 2026. However, the exact date cannot be determined. The Department will follow our normal proposal procedures if this concept moves forward.

Has this change been discussed with stakeholders?
No.

Additional Information
Rules for Areas Limited to Artificial Fly Fishing Only. (Applies to Change #1)

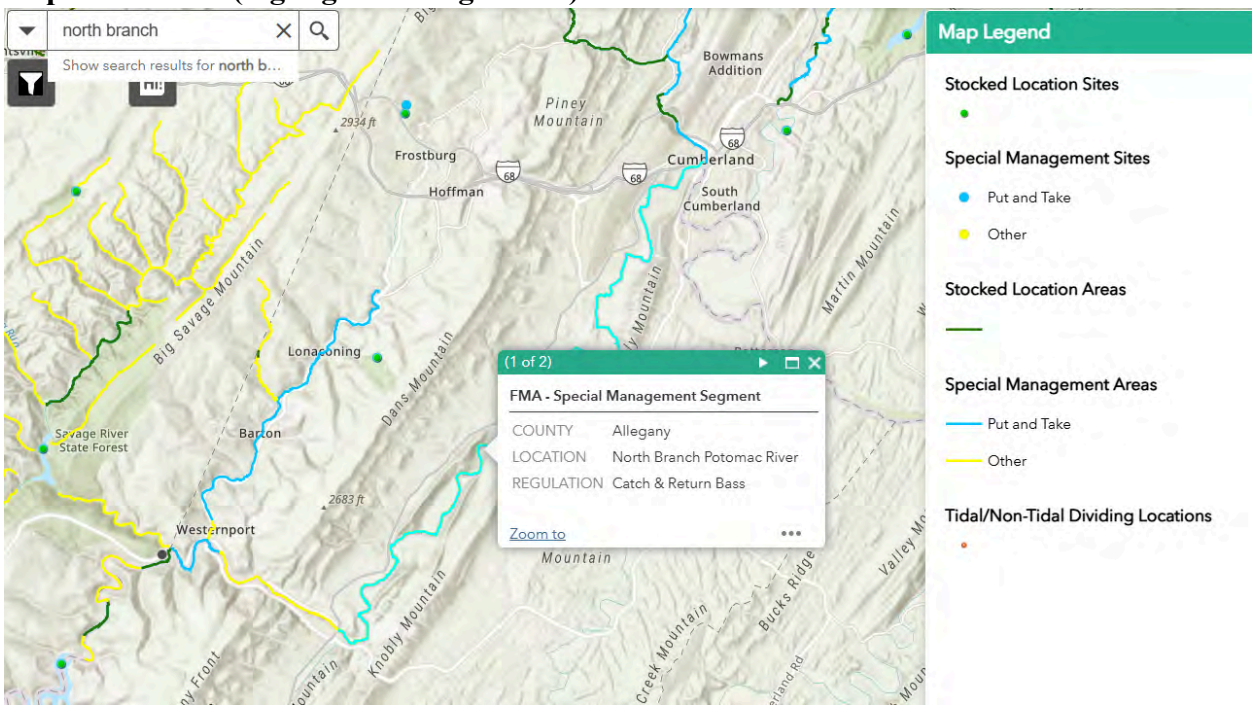
(i) A person may not have any trout in possession while fishing in these areas. All trout which are caught shall be released and returned to the water.
(ii) A person may fish only with artificial flies and streamers constructed in a normal fashion using natural or synthetic materials, or both, which may include feathers, fur, hair, tinsel, thread, fiber, plastic, cork, wire, and rubber, on a single hook with the components wound on or about the hook. A person may not use molded replicas of insects, earthworms, fish eggs, fish, or any invertebrate or vertebrate, either singly or in combination with the other materials, or other lures commonly described as spinners, spoons, or plugs made of metal, plastic, wood, rubber, or a similar substance or a combination of these.
(iii) A person may fish only with conventional fly fishing tackle, including fly rods, fly reels, and fly line with a leader or monofilament line attached. Any method of angling when the fly is cast directly from the reel is prohibited. The use of centerpin, spinning, spincast, and casting reels is prohibited.
(iv) In these areas, a person may not possess or use any natural or live bait, or any device enhanced with a scent and capable of catching fish.
(v) The open season is January 1 through December 31, inclusive.
(vi) A person may not fish with any barbed hook.

Public Angler Access Map

FISHING IN NONTIDAL WATERS - Catch-and-Return Bass Areas

What is being considered?
The Department is considering eliminating the Catch-and-Return Bass Area on the North Branch of the Potomac River. The designated area extends from the spillway in Cumberland, Maryland upstream approximately 25 miles to US Route 220 Bridge at Keyser, West Virginia.

Map of the Area (highlighted in light blue)



Why is this change necessary?
The Department continuously evaluates freshwater fishing regulations for efficacy based on fishery monitoring efforts and habitat assessments. After the initial introduction, the smallmouth bass fishery in this portion of the North Branch of the Potomac River was characterized by faster growth rates, a desirable size distribution, and a higher density of fish. Recent surveys indicate that with the improvements in upstream water quality relating to temperature (i.e., colder temperatures), smallmouth bass growth rates have slowed significantly and the fishery now has a contracted, downstream distribution compared to their initial range following introduction. Age and growth data suggest that the catch and return regulation has become ineffective since smallmouth bass now only rarely reach quality size or the statewide minimum size for harvest (12 inches). Because few fish will survive to reach a quality size, catch and release regulations are no longer expected to improve the overall quality of the fishery or meet angler expectations for a catch and release fishery.

Who will this affect?
This action will affect nontidal anglers that fish within the affected area.

When will this be effective?
The Department projects that this change could be effective in the spring of 2026. However, the exact date cannot be determined. The Department will follow our normal proposal procedures if this concept moves forward.

Has this change been discussed with stakeholders?
No.

Additional Information
Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 08.02.11.03

Rules for Catch-and-Return Bass Areas. Special provisions in effect for catch-and-return bass areas are that a person:

(a) Who catches a largemouth or smallmouth bass shall immediately release that bass in the water where it was caught; and
(b) May not possess largemouth or smallmouth bass while within the designated catch-and-return areas.

Public Angler Access Map

NUISANCE SPECIES - Commercial Sale of Invasive Species Harvested from Fish Lifts

What is being considered?
The Department is considering allowing properly licensed commercial harvesters to sell invasive fish species (e.g., blue catfish, flathead catfish, northern snakehead) that are collected in a fish lift.

A fish lift is a mechanical elevator that lifts fish congregating at the base of dams and carries them across a dam and to the upstream side of the dam. This technology is used to allow migratory fishes the opportunity to by-pass dams and occupy essential habitats upstream of dams. In some cases, fish lifts may catch invasive fish species, which currently can be removed from the catch device and either: 1) retained for beneficial use; 2) retained for costly disposal; or 3) released to Maryland waters alive.

Why is this change necessary?
It is the Department's responsibility to reduce the influence and biomass of aquatic invasive species. This change would allow the Department to carry out its mission to protect natural resources within the guidelines of the state's Aquatic Nuisance Species Plan. Additionally, the Department has been given authority by the General Assembly to enact regulations regarding the catch devices by which invasive fish may be harvested.

Fish lift operations at the Conowingo Dam in the lower Susquehanna River have successfully removed thousands of northern snakehead and flathead catfish from the Susquehanna River and upper Chesapeake Bay. With significant Department involvement, these fish are euthanized and given to fish processors to prepare for human consumption. However, this process depends upon tenuous federal funding and state resources. One option to ensure long-term beneficial use of invasive fishes caught in fish lifts is to authorize fish lifts as a catch device for commercial harvesters who have a valid Unlimited Finfish Harvester or Unlimited Tidal Fish license. At a minimum, a commercial harvester will be required to coordinate with the Department and the hydropower company for accessing the fish; euthanize invasive fish; maintain records on the number and/or biomass of invasive fish collected and disposition of fish; wash and maintain storage supplies for fish; and take possession of the fish.

The consideration for change in regulation supports development of a vital option in the long-term plan to remove invasive fish from fish lifts and allow for the compensation of work via sale of fish, while minimizing burden to Department resources.

Who will this affect?
Commercial licensees who are authorized to harvest finfish and owners or those with responsibility for fish lift operations and management.

Definitions
"Fish lift" means a mechanical system that transports fish vertically over an obstruction in a river. such as a dam.

When would this be effective?
The Department projects that this change could be effective in the spring of 2026. However, the exact date cannot be determined. The Department will follow our normal proposal procedures if this concept moves forward.

Has this change been discussed with stakeholders?
No.

Additional Information
Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 08.02.19.04 and 08.02.19.06
Natural Resources Article, §4-205.1, Annotated Code of Maryland

SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE — Public Shellfish Fishery Area (PSFA) Declassification

What is being considered?
The Department would like to declassify a portion of one Public Shellfish Fishery Area (PSFA 83) and make corrections to two public shellfish fishery areas (PSFA 156 and 152).

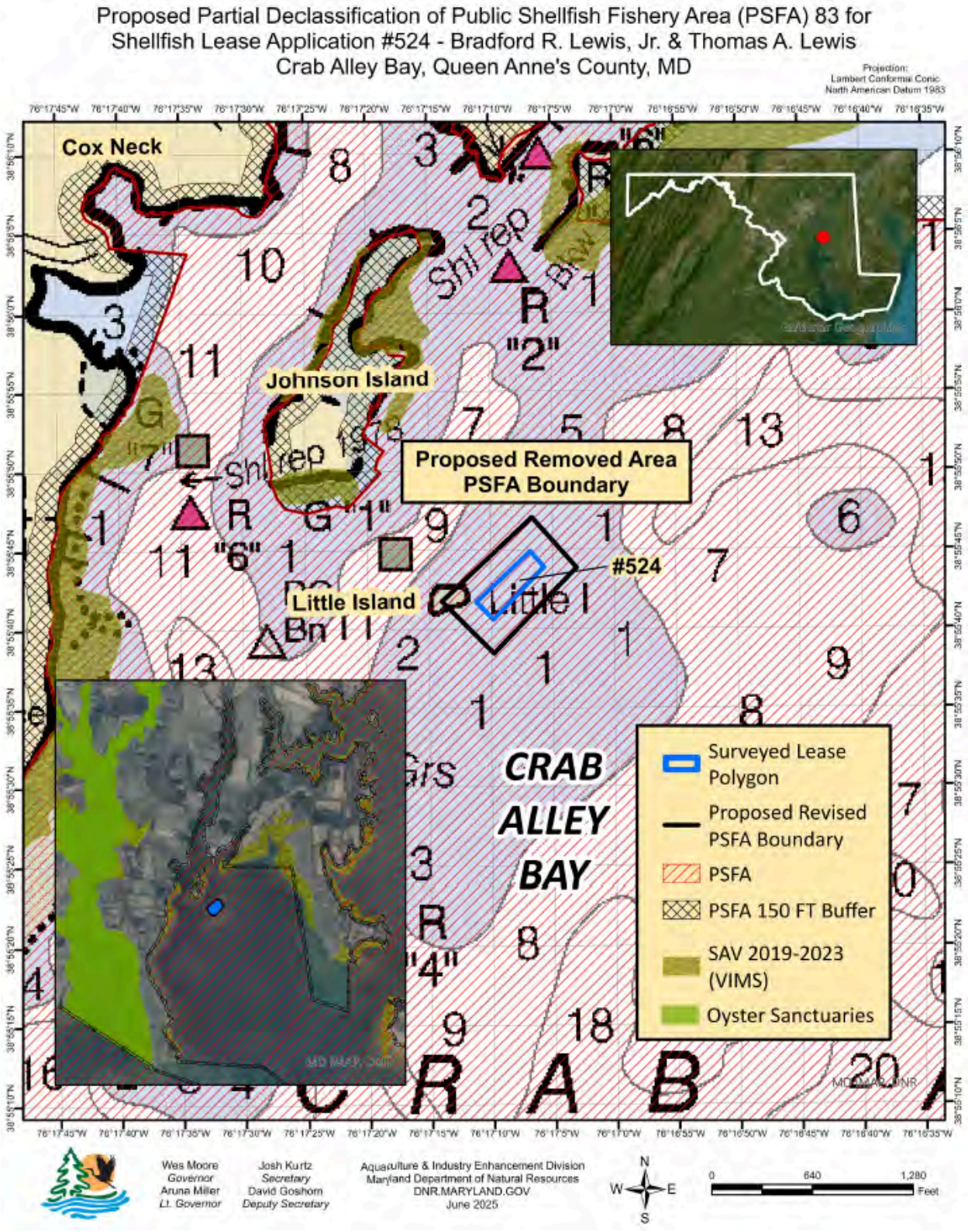
A lease is not allowed to be located within 150 feet of a public shellfish fishery area so the proposed declassification of PSFA 83 includes the leased area and a required 150-foot buffer around the portion of the leased area that falls within the PSFA. A PSFA buffer remains open to oyster harvest following declassification. The PSFA corrections would eliminate overlap of the buffer of PSFA 156 with a pre-existing shellfish aquaculture lease, and of PSFA 152 with an oyster sanctuary.

Why are these changes necessary?
Public Shellfish Fishery Areas of the Chesapeake Bay and Its Tidal Tributaries (June 2023) designates public shellfish fishery areas in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries. A person may petition the Department to declassify a portion of a Public Shellfish Fishery Area (PSFA) by submitting a lease application. The corrections to PSFA 156 and 152 are necessary because the overlaps were inadvertently created when those PSFA boundaries were originally established.

<u>Declassification of PSFA 83</u>
This change would declassify an approximate 8-acre portion of PSFA 83 located in Crab Alley Bay, Queen Anne's County. The declassification would modify the boundary of the PSFA by removing an area located approximately 1,000 feet southeast of Johnson Island and 600 feet east of green channel marker "1", adjacent to and surrounding Little Island, in order to issue a shellfish aquaculture submerged land lease. The total requested lease area is 1.6 acres, all of which falls within PSFA 83. The remaining 6.4 acres to be declassified consists of the required 150-foot buffer between the lease and the PSFA.

The declassification of approximately 1.6 acres of PSFA 83 was requested in shellfish aquaculture lease application #524 (Lewis, Jr. & Lewis). In accordance with COMAR 08.02.04.17, the Department evaluated commercial oyster harvest data and conducted a biological survey of the proposed lease and surrounding buffer area. The Department determined that the average density of oysters per square meter within the proposed lease area meets the regulatory criteria that provides for declassification, and the lease application satisfies the requirements of COMAR 08.02.23.03.

Map of Area


Proposed Partial Declassification of Public Shellfish Fishery Area (PSFA) 83 for
Shellfish Lease Application #524 - Bradford R. Lewis, Jr. & Thomas A. Lewis
Crab Alley Bay, Queen Anne's County, MD
Projection:
Lambert Conformal Conic
North American Datum 1983
Cox Neck
Johnson Island
Little Island
Proposed Removed Area
PSFA Boundary
#524
CRAB
ALLEY
BAY
Surveyed Lease Polygon
Proposed Revised PSFA Boundary
PSFA
PSFA 150 FT Buffer
SAV 2019-2023 (VIMS)
Oyster Sanctuaries
Wes Moore
Governor
Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz
Secretary
David Goshorn
Deputy Secretary
Aquaculture & Industry Enhancement Division
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
DNR.MARYLAND.GOV
June 2025
N
W
E
S
0
640
1,280
Feet

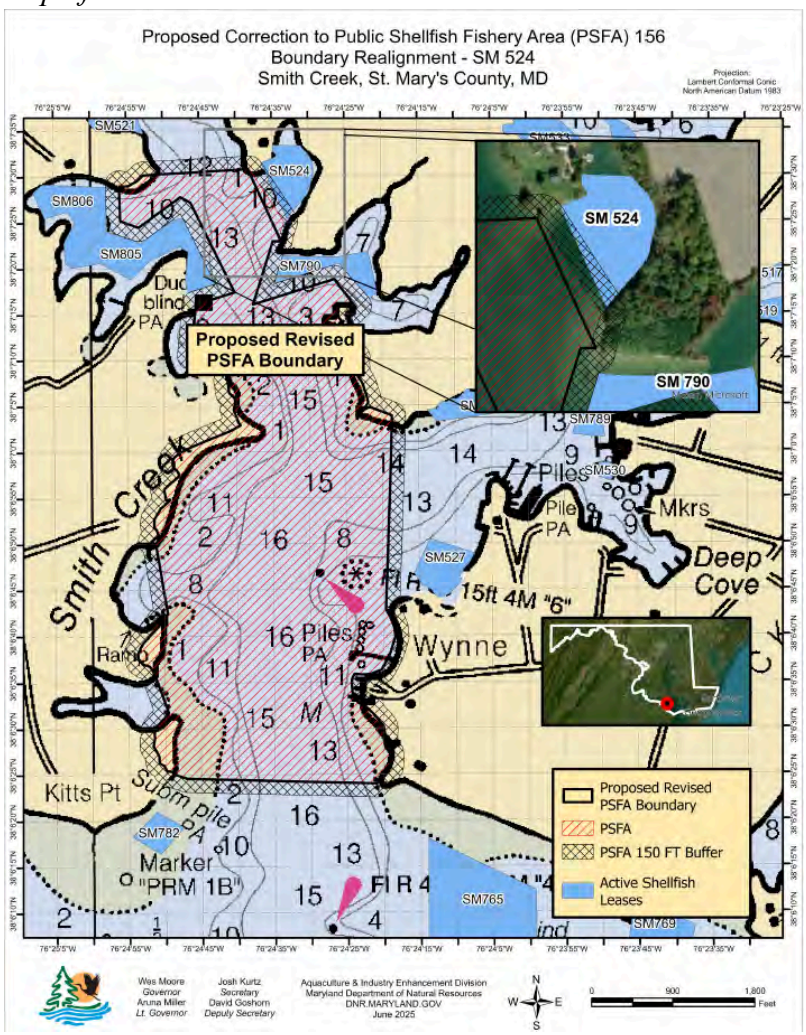
Correction of PSFA 156

The Department needs to adjust the boundary of PSFA 156 so that its 150-foot buffer no longer overlaps with shellfish aquaculture lease SM 524. The PSFA is located in Smith Creek, St. Mary's County.

Recognizing that it was the Department's intention to establish a 150-foot buffer as required by law between all shellfish aquaculture leases and PSFAs when PSFAs were initially established in September of 2011, and that the existence of shellfish lease SM 524 pre-dated the establishment of PSFAs, the Department must adjust the boundary of PSFA 156 to eliminate the buffer overlap and ensure that there is a full 150-foot buffer distance between the PSFA and the lease area.

The Department also needs to adjust another part of the boundary of PSFA 156 so that the PSFA and its 150-foot buffer no longer overlap with shellfish aquaculture lease SM 790. The Department had originally declassified this section of the PSFA in 2018 in order to issue the lease for SM 790 but due to an administrative error, inadvertently reincorporated this section of the PSFA in 2019. That error was discovered when mapping the boundary to establish the 150-foot buffer around lease SM 524 as described above.

Map of Area

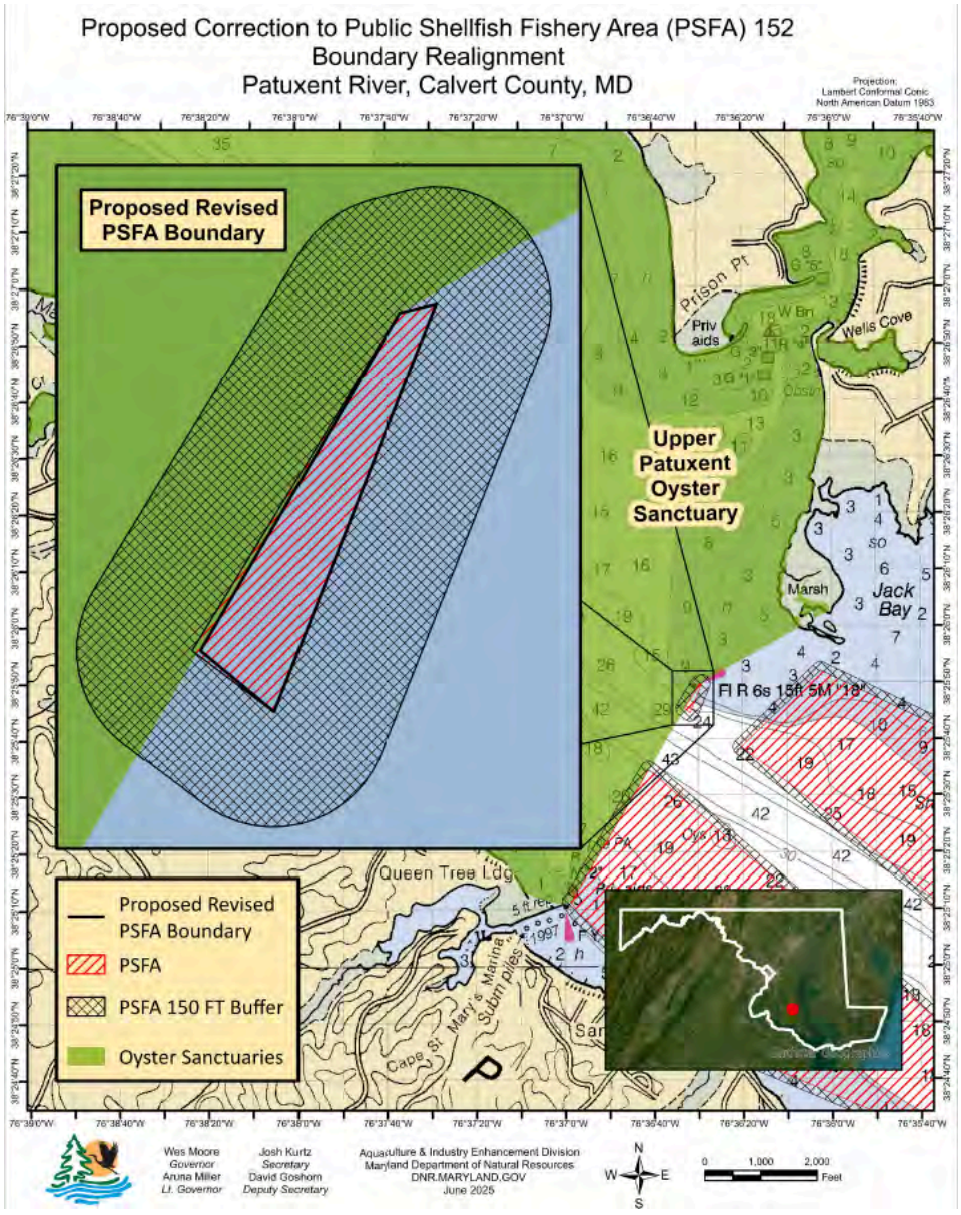


Correction of PSFA 152

The Department needs to adjust the northwestern boundary of PSFA 152 so that it cleanly abuts rather than overlaps the Upper Patuxent Oyster Sanctuary. The PSFA is located in the Patuxent River, Calvert County.

The boundaries of the Upper Patuxent Oyster Sanctuary are described in the "Oyster Sanctuaries of the Chesapeake Bay and Its Tidal Tributaries September 2010" document, which is incorporated by reference into Maryland regulation (Code of Maryland Regulations 08.02.04.15). The same regulation establishes that a person may not harvest wild oysters from a sanctuary described in that document. By definition, a PSFA is a commercially harvestable area, so the two cannot occupy the same location and the department must adjust the boundary of PSFA 152 to eliminate the overlap.

Map of Area



Who will this affect?
Shellfish aquaculturists and individuals who harvest oysters commercially or recreationally in the area that will be leased.

When will this be effective?
The Department projects that this change could be effective in the Winter of 2025-2026. However, the exact date cannot be determined. The Department will follow our normal proposal procedures if this concept moves forward.

Has this change been discussed with stakeholders?
Not yet. The declassifications will be discussed at the July 2025 meeting of the Aquaculture Coordinating Council. They will also be discussed at the July 2025 meetings of SFAC and TFAC and the August 2025 Oyster Advisory Commission meeting.

Additional Info
Natural Resources Article, §4-11A-04, Annotated Code of Maryland
Code of Maryland Regulations 08.02.04.15
Code of Maryland Regulations 08.02.04.17
Code of Maryland Regulations 08.02.23.03
Public Shellfish Fishery Areas of the Chesapeake Bay and Its Tidal Tributaries – June 2023
Oyster Sanctuaries of the Chesapeake Bay and Its Tidal Tributaries September 2010

STRIPED BASS - Commercial Share and Allocation Caps

What is being considered?
The Chesapeake Bay Individual Transferrable Quota Fishery currently has maximum caps on the amount of the fishery that any participant may own permanently (share) or temporarily (annual allocation). For temporary transfers, a commercial tidal fish licensee may not receive an allocation transfer when the licensee possesses 1.5 percent or more of the total commercial quota for the Chesapeake Bay fisheries for that year. For permanent transfers, a commercial tidal fish licensee may not receive a share in a permanent transfer that would result in the transferee possessing more than 1 percent of the total commercial quota for the Chesapeake Bay.

Due to permit consolidation over time and instances where a permit or share/allocation could not be transferred based on going over the cap, the Striped Bass Industry Advisory Workgroup requested the Department to consider changing the share and allocation caps to either:

- 1.75% or 2% for temporary transfers (allocation)
  and
- 1.25% or 1.5% for permanent transfers (shares)

Using 2025's quota as an example, this would increase allocation by between 3,300 to 6,700 pounds depending on which percentage was chosen.

Why is this change necessary?
The Striped Bass Industry Advisory Workgroup informed this Department that this change will provide a greater possibility of being able to fish to the annual set quota. It is important to note that this will not increase the annual quota.

Definitions

"Allocation" means pounds or numbers of striped bass which a striped bass permittee is provided on an annual basis.

"Individual Transferrable Quota" means the fishery in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries that provides exclusive privileges to an individual by assigning a fixed share of the commercial striped bass quota to each individual registered with a striped bass permit.

"Striped bass permit" means a permit issued by the Department which allows a person the privilege to commercially harvest striped bass.

"Share" means a percentage of the quota that is assigned to a specific striped bass permittee.

Who will this affect?
Commercially licensed harvesters that hold striped bass permits.

When would this be effective?
The Department projects that this change could be effective in the spring of 2026. However, the exact date cannot be determined. The Department will follow our normal proposal procedures if this concept moves forward.

Has this change been discussed with stakeholders?
This was discussed at the May 2025 Striped Bass Industry Advisory Workgroup meeting.

STRIPED BASS - Commercial Transfer Processes

What is being considered?
The Department is considering modifying rules regarding the transfer of commercial striped bass permits, shares, and allocation. The license season (September to August) has a different period of time than the striped bass permit season (January to December). Given the differences in the two time periods and in conjunction to temporary transferring licenses, permits, shares, and allocation, there are rare instances when a striped bass permit may be held by a commercially unlicensed individual for a short period of time. Striped bass permits held by commercially unlicensed individuals cannot be fished nor can permits and/or allocation be transferred under current regulations.

Change #1
When a commercial license is temporarily transferred, the striped bass permit does not have to be transferred at the same time. In these instances, the permit is now held by an unlicensed individual since the permanent license holder has temporarily transferred their license. In this scenario, under current rules, the permit and allocation cannot be fished or transferred. Per the recommendation by the Striped Bass Industry Advisory Workgroup, the Department is considering allowing a permanent license holder that permanently holds a striped bass permit to be able to transfer their permit, share, or allocation, even during a time period when they have temporarily transferred their license away.

Change #2
Under current rules, when a temporary license transfer expires prior to the expiration of a temporary striped bass permit and allocation transfer, because the individual is no longer licensed, the permit and allocation can no longer be fished or transferred. To avoid future instances, per the recommendation by the Striped Bass Industry Advisory Workgroup, the Department is considering the following options:

1. A temporary permit and/or quota transfer must have an expiration date equal to the individual's temporary license expiration date. This would also require the transferee to return the tags to the original permit holder by the end of the transfer period or renew the transfer from the original permit holder along with renewing the license transfer in order to complete the season.
   or
2. Allowing an individual whose temporary license transfer has expired while they still have an active permit to temporarily transfer the permit and/or allocation to a currently-licensed individual. This would allow the allocation to be harvested prior to the end of the permit year.

Why is this change necessary?
Current regulation states that a permit can only be used and allocation can only be harvested by a commercially licensed individual. Current regulation also requires that an individual be licensed in order to complete a transfer of a permit, share, or allocation. The changes under consideration would provide more flexibility for the commercial licensees and striped bass permit holders to transfer a striped bass permit, shares in the commercial striped bass fishery, or allocation to commercially licensed individuals.

Definitions

"Allocation" means pounds or numbers of striped bass which a striped bass permittee is provided on an annual basis.

"Striped bass permit" means a permit issued by the Department which allows a person the privilege to commercially harvest striped bass.

“Share” means a percentage of the quota that is assigned to a specific striped bass permittee.

Who will this affect?

Commercially licensed individuals that hold striped bass permits.

When would this be effective?

The Department projects that this change could be effective in the spring of 2026. However, the exact date cannot be determined. The Department will follow our normal proposal procedures if this concept moves forward.

Has this change been discussed with stakeholders?

The Striped Bass Industry Advisory Workgroup discussed this in May 2025 and recommended the Department pursue these changes.

SFAC/TFAC Joint Penalty Workgroup Meeting Summary — June 26, 2025

Attendees
SFAC: Eric Packard, Steve Burleson
TFAC: Robert T. Brown, Rachel Fazenbaker, Bill Scerbo
DNR Staff Present: Jacob Holtz and Karla Schaffer (FABS), Christian Dabb and Emilie Schwartz (OAG), and Kevin Kelly, Shawn Garren, and Brian Noon (NRP)

Recreational

- Trout – Illegal Gear in Catch-and-Release Areas: Should DNR set the penalty for these types of violations at the same level as illegal gear in Delayed Harvest Areas?
    - Workgroup recommendation: go with the same penalty for both types of violations
- Trout – Possession of trout in Delayed Harvest Area when harvest prohibited: Should DNR set the penalty for these types of violations at the same level as possession of trout in catch-and-release areas?
    - Workgroup recommendation: go with the same penalty for both types of violations
- Trout – Youth Trout Day – Fishing by Individual Age 16 or Older: Should these types of violations be treated the same as other closed put-and-take trout area violations?
    - Workgroup recommendation: go with the same penalty for both types of violations

Commercial

- Male crab limits: Should DNR set penalties at the same levels for violating these limits as are currently set for violating female limits?
    - Workgroup recommendation: go with the same penalty for male violations as currently exists for female violations
- Sail dredge and yawl boat area violations: Should DNR set penalties for sail dredge and yawl boat area violations at the same levels that currently exist for power dredge area violations?
    - Workgroup recommendation: go with the same penalty for sail dredge violations as currently exist for power dredge violations
- Lobster and Jonah crab – fail to use required VMS system: Should DNR create administrative penalties for these violations?
    - Workgroup recommendation: don't add any administrative penalty at this time, just apply the fine
- Requested review – fishing without a required commercial license.
    - The workgroup discussed how the current penalty schedule treats all violations of fishing without a required commercial license the same
    - Workgroup received a request to consider making a recommendation to separate out violations where the offender has a commercial license on their account but has failed to renew the license (i.e., operating with a lapsed license) vs. violations where the offender does not have any commercial license at all
    - Current administrative penalty for fishing without a required commercial license is 30 points (1 year suspension) for commercial privileges in addition to a 1 year recreational suspension
    - Workgroup discussed a variety of options
        - Thought that "lapsed license" violations should be treated less severely than "no license" violations
        - One suggestion was to apply 5 points for each violation on a lapsed license

        - Another suggestion was to not apply any points for the first violation on a lapsed license but to apply 10 points to a second or subsequent violation
    - Workgroup recommendation:
        - Continue to treat "no license" violations the same – 30 points on commercial schedule (1 year suspension from commercial activities/ability to get commercial license and 1 year suspension from recreational activities)
        - Modify penalty schedule to recognize "lapsed license" as different from "no license" violations, apply 10 points to a second or subsequent offense but no administrative consequence for a first violation
        - The workgroup also asked to add a reminder about consequences of not timely renewing licenses to the license renewal paperwork, as well as a text message reminder

Recreational and Commercial

- Freshwater mussels – new regulations in tidal waters: Should DNR create administrative penalties for freshwater mussel violations that are in line with the current penalties that exist for nontidal violations?
    - Workgroup recommendation:
        - Recreational: establish the same penalty for tidal water violations of freshwater mussel rules as currently exists for nontidal violations (180 day suspension)
        - Commercial: take no action on administrative penalties now, monitor for any future violations

Update – Natural Resources Article, §4-1210, Annotated Code of Maryland

- General Assembly updated this law with HB 893
- Those individuals who were previously revoked under this authority (and only under this authority) have their revocations converted to 5-year suspensions
    - Any individual who has been out of the oyster fishery for at least 5 years will automatically have their ability to participate in the fishery reinstated
    - Any individual who has not yet been out of the oyster fishery for at least 5 years will have their ability to participate in the fishery automatically reinstated 5 years after their revocation date
- First penalties under this authority will now be 5-year suspensions; second or subsequent penalties under this section will be revocations
- DNR has published an FAQ on its penalty page (available here)

Yellow Perch Committee Update

Updates and Announcements

Presented By:
Carrie Kennedy

July 15, 2025

Yellow Perch Committee Meeting, May 22, 2025

- Committee reviewed stock status, survey methods, and management approach
- Comments:
  - Commercial quotas have gone down significantly since the last management review happened, with no reductions in the recreational sector
  - Don’t have good recreational information, only have MRIP data on the recreational fishery
  - Commercial quota is too low for a reliable fishery
  - Managing the right closing time for the small commercial quota is a significant administrative burden

Yellow Perch Committee Meeting, May 22, 2025

- Recommendations:
  - Implement regulations to reduce the impact of the recreational fishery
    - Protect the older, bigger fish - similar to the commercial fishery and to assist in spawning success
    - Season or creel changes?
  - Collect better recreational data, maybe using SciFish
  - Changes to the commercial management
    - Administrative, quota management changes likely
    - Consider a “minimum” quota that we would not allocate less than

Yellow Perch Committee Meeting, May 22, 2025

- Next Steps:
  - Consider and discuss recreational regulation changes - what's acceptable to the recreational fishery?
    - Discussion
    - Craft Options and review with stakeholders
    - Scope regulations
  - Fall meeting of the Committee to discuss and consider changes in commercial management
    - Discus options for consideration
    - Regulations necessary?

Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 28, 2025, 5:00-7:00pm - Hybrid Meeting, Tawes C1 and Google Meets

Attendance:
Committee Members: Robert T. Brown, Jack Brooks, Steve Lay, Tim Mortus, Mike Tarquini, Bobby Jobes, Blair Baltus, Ryan Mould, CJ Canby, Robert Howes (proxy for Baltimore/Anne Arundel), Chuckie White, Willy Dean, Rachel Dean (proxy for Calvert/St. Mary's/Charles), Curtis Phillips, Logan Hammon, Bobby Whaples (proxy for Talbot/Dorchester), Jim Bright, Mark Kitching, Jody Tull

Maryland Department of Natural Resources: Mandy Bromilow, Carrie Kennedy, Mike Luisi, Kelly Webb, Heather Hayden, George O'Donnell

Meeting materials: The agenda, male and female management options, and meeting presentation were sent out to the Committee in advance. Copies of the agenda and management options were available at the meeting. The meeting agenda, presentation, and minutes will be posted to the meeting webpage on the DNR Fisheries Calendar.

Topics: Regulatory process review, 2025 Winter Dredge Survey results, and management options for summer/fall 2025.

Intro/Announcements:
- The Department reviewed the agenda with the Committee and meeting attendance was taken.
- The Department expressed interest in productive participation, asking for open communication that included some of the background behind the advice given by the members.

Regulatory Process Review:
- The Department explained the process for making regulatory changes.
- When there is a request for a regulatory change, it is first brought to the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission (TFAC)/Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission (SFAC) to get input on the proposed change.
- After the scoping process, the Department will discuss the proposed changes with the Committee and TFAC/SFAC. Once regulations are proposed there is a 90-day period of review.
- From scoping to becoming effective, the timing for regulation changes is about 6 months.
- The request for changes to the vessel day off was used as an example. A committee member described that currently the day off is for the vessel which is a problem for multiple licenses using one vessel. There was discussion on the issue and the request to change the regulation to the individual license holder. This issue will be scoped at the July 17th TFAC meeting.
- The Committee will meet again tentatively on July 9th to discuss any additional actions that need to be scoped at the TFAC meeting on July 17th.

2025 Winter Dredge Survey Results:
- The Department briefed the Committee on the 2025 Bay-Wide Winter Dredge Survey results:
    - Total crab abundance was 238 million crabs, a decrease of 25%, and the second lowest in the time series.

  - While adult female abundance decreased by 19% to 108 million crabs, the population remained above the threshold of 72.5 million crabs, indicating a sustainable female abundance based on the current management framework.
  - Adult male abundance was 26 million crabs, a decrease of 43%, which was similar to 2022 but still the lowest in the time series.
  - Juvenile abundance decreased by 25% to 103 million crabs, the third lowest in the time series.
  - Bay-wide, commercial harvest decreased to 43 million pounds in 2024. Virginia and Potomac River had a slight decrease in harvest while Maryland harvest increased slightly in 2024. However, Maryland maintained management measures from 2023 so the changes in harvest could be due to changes in crab distribution. Virginia harvested 33%, Potomac River 7% and Maryland 60% of bay-wide harvest in 2024.
  - The female exploitation rate decreased to 22% which is below the exploitation target. Based on the current reference points, overharvesting is not occurring.
  - The male exploitation rate decreased to 30% which is below the conservation trigger identified by the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC).
  - A committee member asked about overwintering mortality. The Department informed the Committee that there was a significant increase in overwintering mortality in 2025 and that information would be included in the CBSAC report in late June.
  - Even though the population is down in all segments, based on the female biological reference points, the population is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.
- The Department commented that there is a new benchmark stock assessment being conducted but there is still uncertainty in harvest reporting, predation, and changes in climate.
- Some committee members discussed headlines concerning the dredge survey results and poor publicity. They asked that the Department try to get the message out to the public that overfishing is not occurring and that there are other unknown factors that could be affecting the population. The Department mentioned that the press release and conversations with the media included that message. One committee member encouraged using social media to help with messaging and connecting with the public.
- Committee members expressed concerns about differences in winter dredge survey sampling between Maryland and Virginia and how that could affect Bay-wide population estimates. The Department explained that both states conduct side-by-side sampling to account for differences in gear efficiency. The Department noted that there were more sites with zero crabs in the 2025 winter dredge survey compared to recent years.
- There was discussion by many committee members about the impact of predation and concern over strict harvesting limits on red drum. Red drum are managed federally by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). One committee member stressed the need for a multi-species management plan for the Chesapeake Bay while another asked if the Department could present to ASMFC the effect of the current limits on the Chesapeake Bay population. The Department noted that there is a potential draft addendum to the red drum stock assessment that would reduce red drum harvest in the Mid-Atlantic. If the addendum is approved for public

comment, there would be a public hearing in Maryland in which crabbers could provide input to the management board regarding red drum impacts on the blue crab population.

- Multiple committee members commented on how the harvest has been similar regardless of recruitment and wondered if the survey is missing crabs when sampling.

Female Management Options:

- With a new stock assessment in progress and the population not being overfished, the Department recommendation for management was to maintain status quo. CBSAC also recommended continuing with precautionary measures.
- The Department presented 3 options to the Committee:
    - Option 1 – Status quo. Same bushel limits as 2023 and 2024, with a November 30th closure.
    - Option 2 – Higher limits in the fall by adding one additional bushel for all licenses in September and October but lowering limits in July and August by 2 bushels and 1 bushel in November, with a Nov 30th closure.
    - Option 3 – Closing on November 20th but an additional bushel for all license types in September and October.
- **MOTION**: A motion was made for Option 1, status quo. The motion carried with unanimous consent.

Male Management Options:

- The Department explained that the criteria of both a combined adult male and juvenile abundance of 220 million crabs and an adult male abundance of 40 million were not met so male management measures should continue for 2025. The Department presented three options:
    - Option 1 – Status quo, same bushel limits as last year with the Labor Day exemption.
    - Option 2 – Limits in September and October.
    - Option 3 – No limits for 2025, season closure of October 31st and a delayed opening until April 22nd for the 2026 season.
- Some committee members felt that not much has been accomplished after three years of limits.
- One committee member expressed that there was no future in the industry with male limits and asked about the impact option 3 would have on other regions. Lower bay representatives explained that Option 3 would be very damaging to their region while one member stated it would harm small businesses across the state. When a committee member asked about the effect of changing the size limit to 5.5 inches after Labor Day to offset the need for catch limits, representatives stressed that a larger male size limit would shut down the lower bay fishery and need a solution for the entire bay is needed
- **MOTION:** A motion was made for Option 1, status quo. With no opposition, the motion was passed.

Discussion and Public Comment:

- The Committee expressed interest in knowing the regional distribution of the winter dredge survey results and an explanation of how the estimates are calculated.

- The Committee discussed concern over changes in climate expanding the range of predatory species and disrupting migration patterns for multiple species. There was also concern about increasing development, sewage impacts, and other factors affecting water quality and habitat. The Department mentioned the Chesapeake Bay Program, a coalition working together for a healthier watershed.
- There was a public comment agreeing that climate change was affecting the ecosystem and supporting multi-species management as well as planning for new and expanding populations. They advised the Committee that they were told information on blue catfish surveys would not be included in the stock assessment.
- One committee member asked if there were ways to track recreational crab harvest like hunting reporting requirements through an app or other reporting option.
- There were some comments on commercial harvest reporting. The Department stressed that only 65% of 2024 commercial harvest reports have been submitted, which adds uncertainty when making management decisions. There were ideas for using apps, imposing fees or flagging licenses for non-reporting but members of the Committee mentioned there was concern over false reports and unreliable data while the Department explained that it was hard to enforce in court.

Closing Remarks/Other Business:

- Former committee member Greg Kemp passed away, services are being held in St. Michaels.
- The Department let the Committee know of volunteer opportunities with non-profit organizations for collecting ghost pots.
- The Department asked if anyone was interested in participating in the Cooperative Data Collection Program to contact Mandy Bromilow or Heather Hayden.

Meeting of the Invasive Catfish Advisory Committee
Wednesday, April 9, 2025
Virtual Meeting

Committee Members in Attendance: Dr. Kenny Rose, Dr. Noah Bressman, Capt. Dave Bell, Vice Chair James Bowling, Chair Billy Rice, Mitch Bode, Bill Paulshock, Tim Mortus, David Sikorski, Steve Lay, Robert T. Brown

DNR Staff in Attendance: Dr. Joe Love, John Mullican, Chris Jones

Public in Attendance: Liam Hanley, Jesse Howe, Kelly Swann, Norman McCowan

Meeting Minutes

Opening Remarks/Roll Call

Chair Billy Rice called the meeting to order at 6:05; Chris Jones took a roll call.

Update on Commercial Electrofishing Chase Boat Pilot Project

Chris Jones detailed the current state of the commercial electrofishing chase boat pilot project.

- Applications have been reviewed
- Selected Participants will be notified soon
- The remainder of applicants will be notified thereafter
- Sampling will occur on 4 river systems
    - Sassafras River
    - Patuxent River
    - Chester River
    - Choptank River
- Pilot is expected to run between July 28 and September 15.

Bill Paulshock reiterated concerns surrounding electrofishing and how it affects blue crabs. He has requested that there be further studies to ensure that electrofishing does not result in unintended blue crab mortality. Robert T. Brown echoed these sentiments. Dr. Noah Bressman agreed that is worth investigating these interactions, but explained that overlap of electrofishing areas and blue crabs should be relatively small due to the salinity requirements for electrofishing. Tim Mortus expressed doubts about unintended mortality of blue crabs due to electrofishing based on his personal experience shocking crabs before cooking them. DNR Staff explained that electrofishing has been in practice for over 40 years in Maryland, Virginia and Delaware as a surveying method.

Recreational Juglining for Catfish

Jesse Howe gave a brief talk detailing recreational juglining and expressed interest in having the current regulations reviewed to extend the season and generally ease the regulations on recreational juglining. He also expressed interest in understanding why recreational juglining regulations are so much more restrictive then commercial trotlining regulations when our end goal is blue catfish biomass removal. Dave Sikorski then inquired about the background on these regulations. DNR Staff clarified that the commercial trotline regulations were created much more recently and created as a tool to help remove invasive catfish biomass, but the recreational juglining rules were created earlier and not as a tool for invasive catfish removal. ICAC and DNR Staff agreed that this could be a viable recreational tool. DNR Staff committed to finding answers to better understand why the juglining rules were created and considering revisions.

Future Agenda Topics/Public Comment

Chris Jones gave a brief overview of the Mitigation Action and Waterman Support Act (MAWS Act) introduced to the House on 7/7/2025. It is an act that will create grants for pet and animal food manufacturers to incentivize watermen to harvest blue catfish for use in the pet/animal food industry. It will help create infrastructure and potentially subsidize watermen to harvest blue catfish and sell them to companies who are MAWS Act participants. It has only been introduced and the committee will monitor the Act so that we can inform our harvesters as necessary.

Chris Jones also acknowledged the request from the last meeting to have a conversation regarding changing gill net regulations to support increased blue catfish gill netting. Staff is currently working on 3 pilot projects and is currently field sampling. We will intend to get it on the next available ICAC agenda.

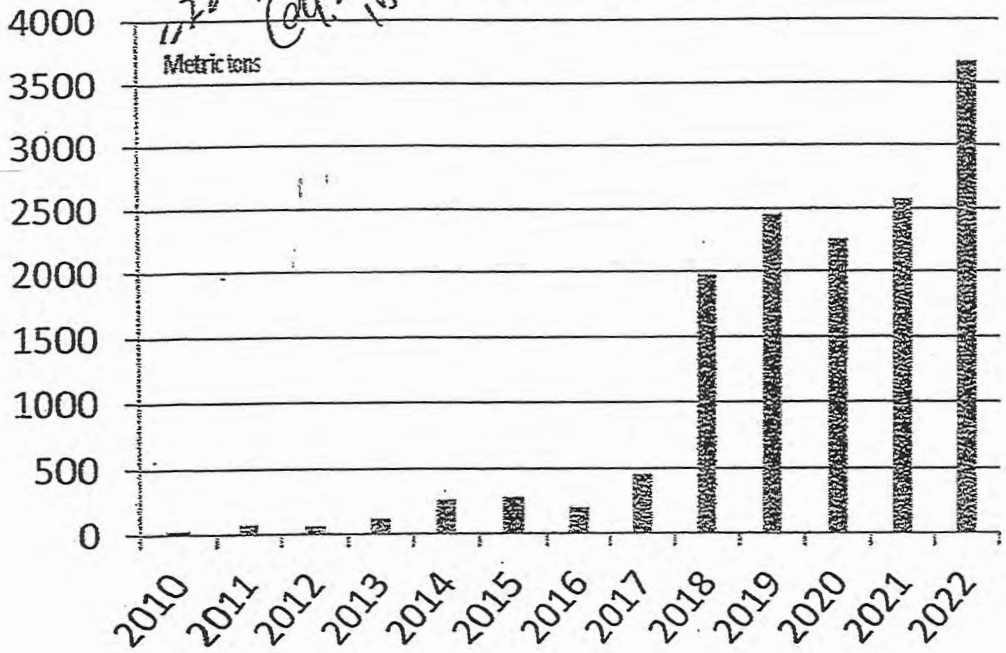
Dr. Noah Bressman sent out a link to publicize his fishing tournament on the weekend of 7/18/2025.

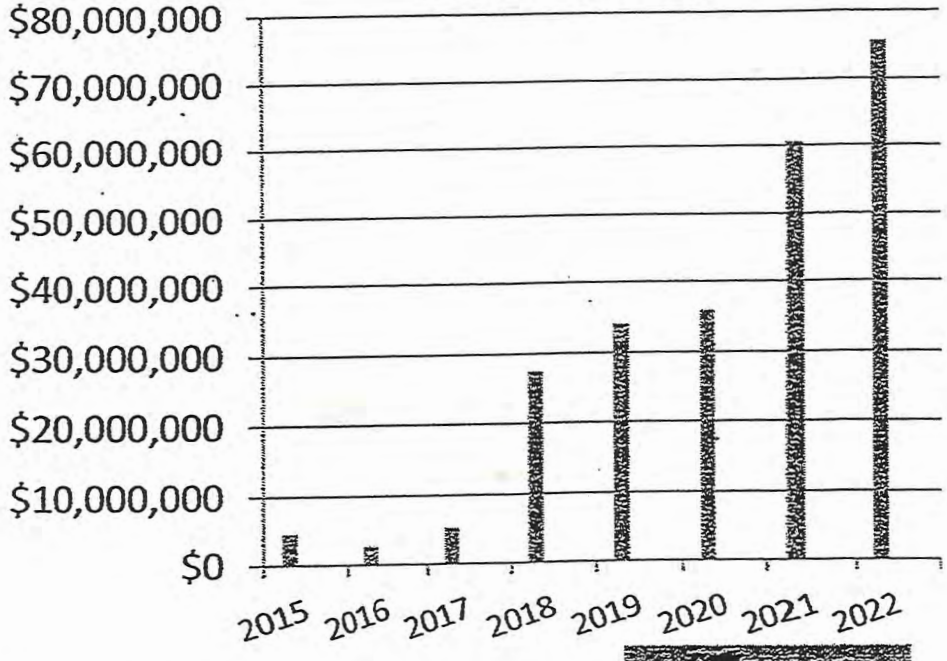
Chair Billy Rice asked if the Department will be able to provide updates on the results of the Commercial Electrofishing Pilot at the October Meeting. Staff said they would be prepared to report at the October Meeting.

Chair Billy Rice adjourned the meeting at 6:40 pm.

Annual Blue Crab Meat Imports from Venezuela

- After blue crab meat imports from Venezuela increased during 2017, a reported link between consuming Venezuelan crab meat and Vibrio infections during 2018 led to public health warnings against consuming Venezuelan crab meat. This led to adoption of HPP treatment for imported crab meat, which sharply reduced food safety issues, while also increasing shelf life. Since that time, imports of Venezuela crab meat have continued to grow.
- Mid-2018 health warnings against consuming crab meat from Venezuela resulted in only a short term reduction in sales. With adoption of HPP, total imports during 2018 were up four-fold, from 478 mt (1.05 million lbs) in 2017 to 1,978 mt (4.4 million lbs) in 2018. Imports have continued to increase with some variation, reaching 3,667 mt (8.1 million lbs) in 2022.
- The value of U.S. blue crab meat imports from Venezuela increased from $5.3 million in 2017, to $27.5 million in 2018. With use of HPP, import value has since tripled, to $75.6 million in 2022.





Source: U.S. Dept of Commerce data, Market Solutions LLC analysis

Market Solutions LLC
Insight for Action

Take a look at todays prices!!

Get Outlook for iOS

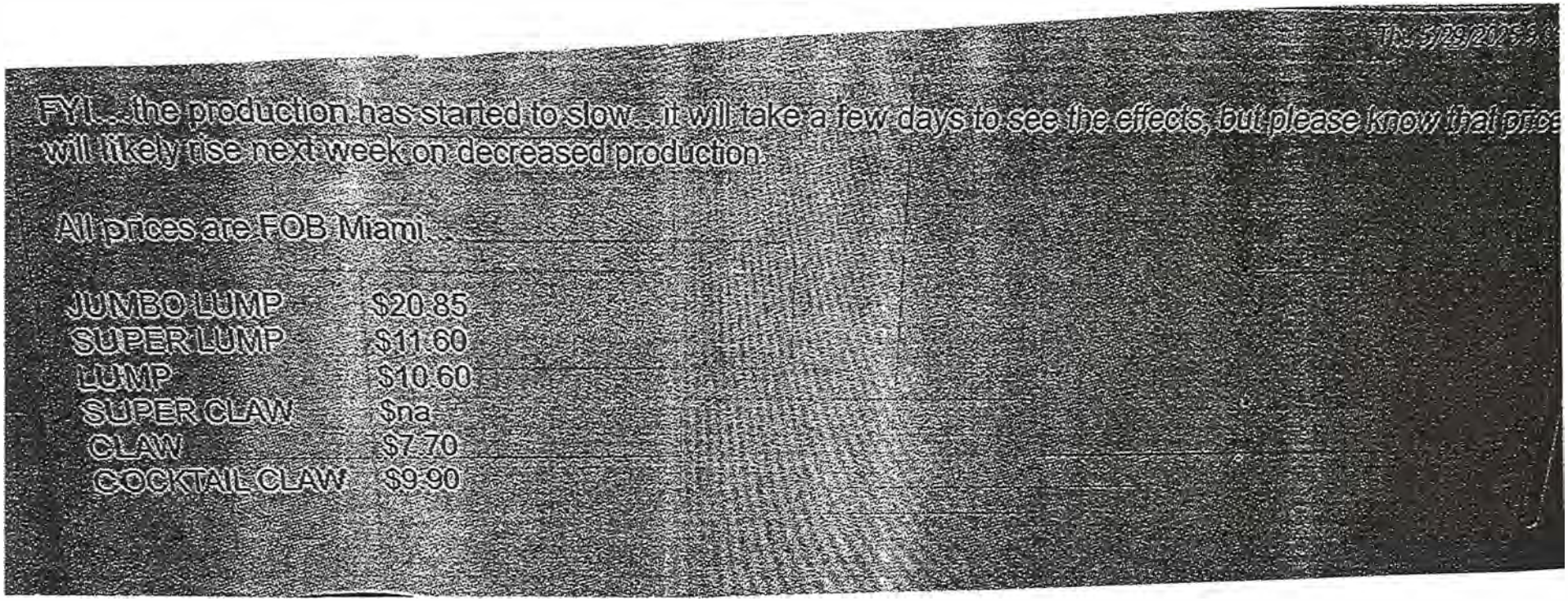
[redacted]

Sent: Friday, March 7, 2025 7:35:07 AM

Subject: Fresh Venz Crabmeat Pricing today...

All prices are FOB Miami....some grades are limited...

JUMBO LUMP	$16.60
SUPER LUMP	$8.60
LUMP	$7.60
SUPER CLAW	$7.50
CLAW	$NA
COCKTAIL CLAW	$9.00


FYI... the production has started to slow.. it will take a few days to see the effects, but please know that price
will likely rise next week on decreased production.
All prices are FOB Miami
JUMBO LUMP $20.85
SUPER LUMP $11.60
LUMP $10.60
SUPER CLAW $na
CLAW $7.70
COCKTAIL CLAW $9.90

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Global Agricultural Information Network

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution **Date:** June 17, 2022

Report Number: VE2022-0020

Report Name: A Booming Venezuelan Seafood Industry

Country: Venezuela

Post: Caracas

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Fishery Products, Fishery Products

Prepared By: FAS Staff

Approved By: Abigail Mackey

Report Highlights:

Venezuelan seafood production totaled 241,000 MT in 2021, growing by 16 percent compared to 2020. Seafood products are Venezuela's largest agricultural export, accounting for more than 54 percent of the total value of agricultural exports in 2021. Seafood exports have increased 174 percent since 2016 and in 2021, totaled $361.7 million. The major exported seafood products are shrimp, crab, and fish. The primary markets are the European Union (shrimp) and the United States (crab and fish). Aquaculture shrimp production grew 157 percent since 2016 and was the leading agricultural export product in 2021. The Venezuelan shrimp industry is an expanding business, is highly specialized, and employs leading technologies and production practices. In 2021, Venezuela imported 363,325 MT of soybean meal, of which 94 percent was U.S. origin.

Venezuelan Seafood Production

Commercial fishing has a long history in Venezuela due to more than 2,000 kilometers of coastline and watersheds with rivers and lakes with excellent fish production potential. In 2021, total seafood production in Venezuela was 241,000 MT, according to official Venezuelan government estimates, growing by 16 percent compared to 2020. According to official statements, by the end of 2022, seafood production is forecast to increase by 4 to 5 percent, reaching 250,000 MT. In 2021, 83 percent of seafood production came from wild caught fishing and 17 percent from the aquaculture industry.

Wild Caught Seafood Production

Industrial fishing in Venezuela focuses on tuna on the Venezuelan continental shelf and in the eastern Pacific. This type of production represents 50 to 60 percent of total fish production and is primarily exported. In recent years, tuna production has grown, with exports increasing by 243 percent between 2016 and 2021. The artisanal wild caught fishing sector is compromised of individuals, families, and small cooperatives using small-scale, low-tech, and low-capital fishing practices. Their catch is primarily unprocessed for local consumption. They account for the remaining 40 to 50 percent of seafood production, and their primary products are sardine, pepitona clam (turkey wing ark clam), and blue crab. Other fish of relevance in the local market but produced in smaller volumes include corvina, carite or king mackerel, pargo or common seabream, jurel, and catfish.

Aquaculture Production

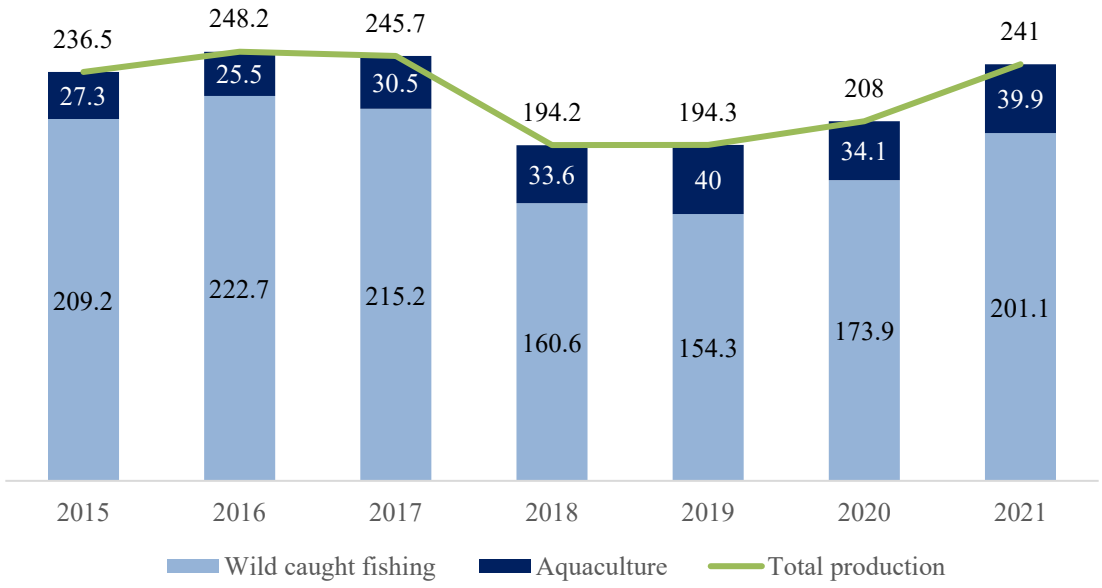
Industrial shrimp farming represents the largest proportion of aquaculture production in Venezuela. The rest comes mostly from freshwater fish farming, especially cachama and rainbow trout. Total aquaculture production in 2021 in Venezuela is estimated at 39,900 MT, growing by 54 percent since 2016. Most of this growth was driven by the increase in shrimp production, which accounted for 88 percent of total production in 2021 and is mostly destined for export.

Table 1: Seafood Production in Venezuela, 2015 – 2021 (thousand MT)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Artisanal Fishing	110.6	79.7	110.0	74.8	83.0	88.7	91.5
Industrial Fishing	98.6	143.0	105.2	85.8	71.3	85.2	109.6
Artisanal Aquaculture	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.9	4.9
Industrial Aquaculture	22.8	21.0	26.0	29.0	35.3	29.2	35.0
Total Production	236.5	248.2	245.7	194.2	194.3	208.0	241.0

Sources: FAO, Global Aquaculture Alliance, Trade Data Monitor, FAS Caracas

Figure 1: Seafood Production in Venezuela by Production Type, 2015 – 2021 (thousand MT)



Data Source: FAO, Global Aquaculture Alliance, Trade Data Monitor, FAS Caracas

Seafood Legal and Institutional Framework

Fishing and aquaculture practices in Venezuela are regulated by the Fishing and Aquaculture Law (Ley de Pesca y Acuicultura) of 2003. This law is intended to promote the integral development of the sector, emphasizing the availability of products for the local market, favoring the artisanal fishing sector and biodiversity. The Ministry of Fishing and Aquaculture (MPA) is responsible for regulating and promoting the national fisheries and aquaculture sectors. MPA promotes production, industry development, and related marketing activities that support domestic product demand and encourage international trade. In addition, MPA regulates the fisheries and aquaculture sectors through the Fishing and Aquaculture Institute (INSOPESCA), the regulatory arm of MPA.

Seafood Consumption

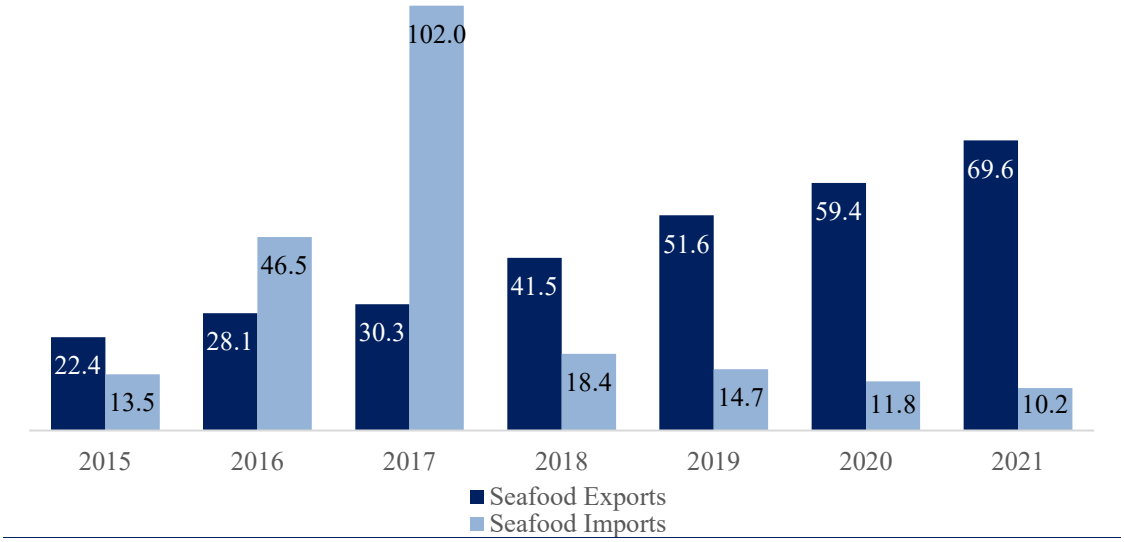
According to private industry, per capita consumption of seafood in 2021 in Venezuela was 2.5 to 3.5 kg, representing only 5 percent of total animal protein consumption. In 2000, before the Bolivarian revolution, per capita consumption reached 14.5 kg and accounted for 20 percent of total animal protein. Since then, its share has declined compared to other types of animal protein, when economic conditions and preferences favored the consumption of chicken and beef. Currently, Venezuelan consumption is based on cheap fish and canned fish products, such as tuna and sardines. Traditionally, the consumption of the most valuable fresh fish products is focused in coastal areas, but its variations have always been related to the availability and price of other proteins.

Trade

Seafood Exports

In 2021, seafood products accounted for more than 54 percent of the value of Venezuelan agricultural exports and have grown 173.5 percent since 2016. In 2021, Venezuela exported 28.9 percent of its total production. This is a mature industry focused on exporting shrimp, crab, and fish and involves industrial or artisanal production, depending on the product. The major markets are Europe, the United States, and, more recently, Asia. In 2021, the most exported seafood products were shrimp (US $184.9 million, 51.1 percent) and crabs (US $62.4 million, 17.3 percent), and the main export destinations were the European Union (US $170.5 million, 47.1 percent) and the United States (US $119.7 million, 33.1 percent).

Figure 2: Venezuelan Seafood Trade, 2015 – 2021 (thousand MT)



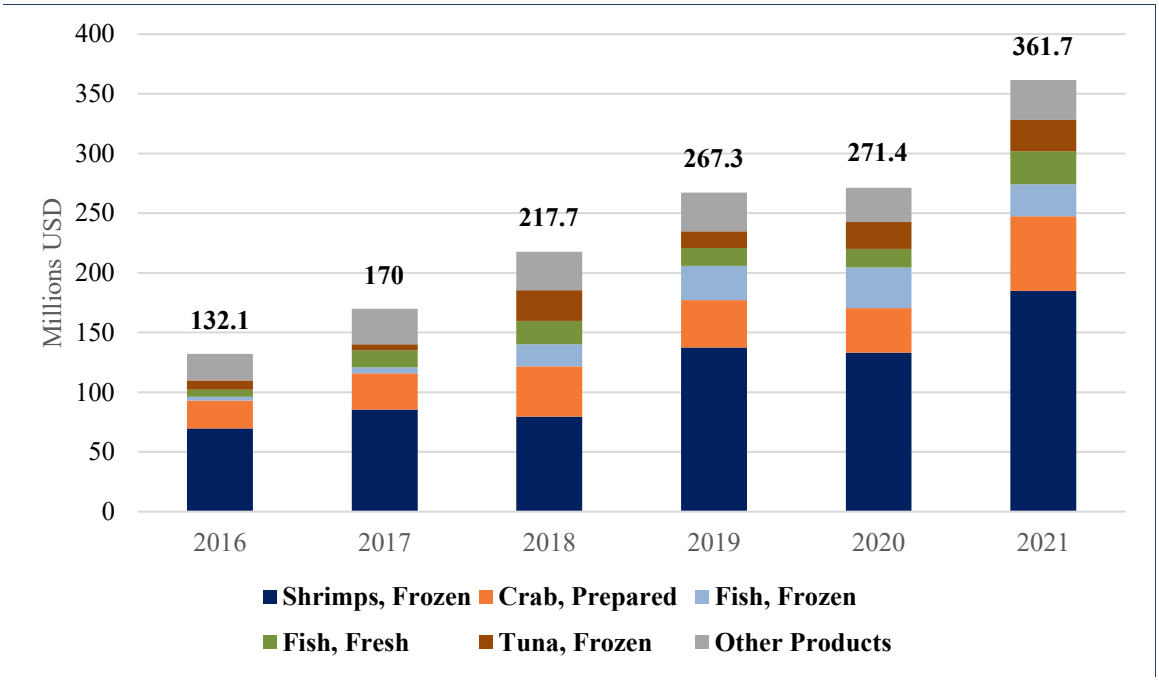
Source: Trade Data Monitor

Table 2: Value and Volume of Venezuelan Seafood Exports, 2016-2021

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% CHG 2016-2021
Seafood Exports (thousand MT)	28.13	30.33	41.46	51.64	59.42	69.63	146%
Seafood Exports (millions USD)	132.1	170.0	217.7	267.3	271.4	361.7	173%
AVG Price $/MT	4,698	5,604	5,250	5,176	4,567	5,190	11%

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Figure 3: Top Five Venezuelan Seafood Products Exported (USD millions), 2016-2021



Source: Trade Data Monitor

Table 3: Venezuelan Seafood Exports by Country and Product in 2021

Export Destination	Top Ven. imports (USD million)	Total Ven. Imports (USD million)	Market Share of Ven. Exports
EU-27	Shrimp ($160.0) Other products ($7.1) Fish frozen ($3.3)	$170.5	47%
United States	Crab ($62.4) Fish frozen ($23.5) Fish fresh ($14.4) Other products ($12.5) Shrimp ($6.9)	$119.7	33%
Guatemala	Tuna ($21.2) Shrimps ($0.5)	$21.7	6%
China	Shrimp ($15.9)	$15.9	4%
Ecuador	Other products ($7.3) Tuna ($5.2) Fish fresh ($0.1)	$12.5	4%
Other countries	Fish fresh ($12.4) Other products ($6.5) Shrimp ($1.6) Fish frozen ($0.9)	$21.4	6%
TOTAL	**Shrimp ($184.9)**	**$361.7**	**-**

	Crab ($62.4) **Other products ($33.4)** **Fish frozen ($27.7)** **Fish fresh ($26.8)** **Tuna ($26.4)**		

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Seafood Imports

In 2021, seafood products accounted for only 1.3 percent of the value of Venezuelan agricultural imports and have declined 78 percent in volume since 2016. In 2021, the most imported seafood products to Venezuela were tuna ($15.48 million, 46.7 percent) and prepared fish ($7.42 million, 22.4 percent). The main origins of imports were China ($9 million, 27.2 percent) and Ecuador ($8.53 million, 25.7 percent).

Table 4: Venezuelan Seafood Imports by Country and Product in 2021 (USD million)

	Tuna, Prep.	Fish, Prep.	Salmon, Frozen	Sardine, Prep.	Squid, Frozen	Other Prod.	Total	% by country
China	5.76	1.86	-	0.90	-	0.51	**9.03**	27%
Ecuador	5.16	3.21	-	-	-	0.16	**8.53**	26%
Brazil	1.65	0.81	-	0.08	-	0.62	**3.17**	10%
Chile	-	-	1.79	-	-	1.18	**2.96**	9%
USA	0.39	0.23	0.04	-	0.69	1.22	**2.57**	8%
Other	2.52	1.31	0.18	0.14	0.46	2.32	**6.93**	21%
Total	**15.48**	**7.42**	**2.01**	**1.12**	**1.14**	**6.01**	**33.19**	-
% by product	47%	22%	6%	3%	3%	18%	-	-

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Between 2020 and 2021, the value of Venezuelan imports of seafood products increased by 24 percent and is likely to increase further in 2022. U.S. seafood products still maintain a low market share, estimated at 8 percent by value in 2021. The products with the most significant growth potential for U.S. exporters are prepared tuna (HS-160414), and prepared fish (HS-160420).

For more information on how to export to Venezuela, please see FAS Caracas's 2022 Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS) Country Report, and FAS Caracas's 2022 Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS) Certificate Report.

Venezuelan Seafood Trade with the United States

Venezuelan agricultural exports to the United States grew by 178 percent since 2016, totaling $174.2 million in 2021 and accounting for 26 percent of Venezuela's total agricultural exports. In 2021, seafood

products made up 69 percent of total exports to the United States. The United States is a long-standing market for Venezuelan seafood exports, with peak exports of 23,000 MT and $130 million in 2004.

The top seafood product exported to the United States is blue crab. Crab exports to the United States have grown 167 percent since 2016 and in 2021 totaled $65.4 million, accounting for 52 percent of seafood exports. The second most important category of seafood products exported to the United States is fresh or frozen fish, totaling $37.9 million in 2021. Shrimp exports to the United States reached $27.1 million in 2019 but have declined significantly since then, totaling $6.9 million in 2021.

Table 5: Venezuelan Seafood Exports to the United States by Product, 2016-2021 (USD million)

Product	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% CHG 2016-2021
Crab	23.3	30.2	42.3	39.5	37.2	62.4	167%
Shrimp	16.6	12.7	19.9	27.1	10.2	6.9	-58%
Fish, Fresh	2.3	9.6	13.1	11.5	13.0	23.5	910%
Fish, Frozen	1.0	1.9	6.4	10.2	9.1	14.4	1,353%
Tuna Fresh	7.9	12.9	16.7	15.7	15.3	3.6	-54%
Other Products	1.6	4.1	6.1	5.3	3.5	8.9	452%
Total	**52.8**	**71.4**	**104.5**	**109.2**	**88.4**	**119.7**	**127%**

Source: Trade Data Monitor

A Burgeoning Venezuelan Aquaculture Shrimp Industry

Venezuelan aquaculture shrimp production was estimated at 35,000 MT in 2021, representing an increase of 108 percent compared to the 16,800 MT in 2012. Venezuela currently has 36 shrimp operations with approximately 12,000 hectares of cultivation ponds distributed in the states of Trujillo, Anzoátegui, Sucre, Nueva Esparta, Mérida, Falcón, and Zulia. Around 11,000 hectares are located on the western coast, in the state of Zulia, and a smaller proportion in the state of Falcón. Although Venezuelan production has grown steadily, and despite the economic collapse, it is still minor compared to the world production and trade of aquaculture shrimp. In 2021, global trade in aquaculture shrimp was estimated at 4.5 million MT. In the Western Hemisphere, Ecuador accounts for more than half of the farmed shrimp supply with about 500,000 MT annually.

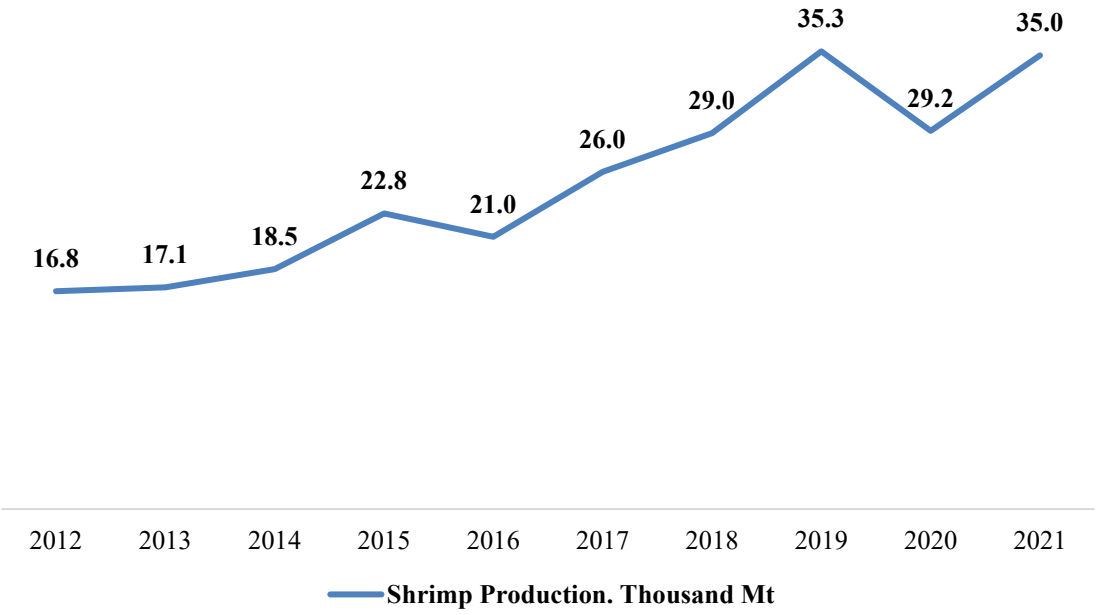
There are 16 new expansion projects under development in Venezuela, which total 4,000 hectares and will bring the total area of cultivation ponds to 16,000 hectares in 2022. According to the Venezuelan shrimp industry, the addition of more farming area and improvements in productivity will allow production to increase to about 50,000 MT by 2022.

The Association of Western Shrimp Producers (Asoproco) represents producers in Venezuela. The shrimp industry in Venezuela uses highly technical production methods and systems with competitive performance levels worldwide. The most advanced shrimp farms are now vertically integrated, having shrimp seed laboratories and feed plants to cover their consumption and supply independent shrimp

farms. Some of these companies have international quality, management, and food safety certifications such as Best Aquaculture Practices, Aquaculture Stewardship Council, and HACCP.

Although shrimp farming is one of the few industries that has grown in recent years, despite the economic crisis, it is also affected by persistent problems that are common to other industries including failures in the supply of electricity and fuel, poor infrastructure, port delays, and excessive bureaucracy that can complicate sanitary and environmental permits.

Figure 4: Volume of Aquaculture Shrimp Production in Venezuela, 2012-2021 (thousand MT)



Source: Global Aquaculture Alliance, FAS Caracas

Picture 1: Shrimp Farm on the Coast of Lake Maracaibo, Zulia State

Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Shrimp Feed Production and Trade

The domestic production of feed for shrimp was estimated at 52,500 MT in 2021, with an installed capacity of 180,000 MT. Local production meets 100 percent of fish feed demand and is manufactured using imported raw materials. Feed accounts for 55 to 60 percent of the operation costs in typical intensive systems and around 40 percent in semi-intensive systems. The average feed conversion ratio in Venezuela is 1.5:1. In other words, to produce 1 kilo of shrimp, 1.5 kg of feed is needed, depending on the intensity and efficiency of the system.

The major components of a typical 35 percent protein shrimp feed are wheat flour (35 percent), soybean meal (20 percent) and fishmeal (25 percent). In 2021, Venezuela imported 363,325 MT of soybean meal, of which 94 percent was U.S. soybean meal. Other components used in a minor proportion include fish oil, soy lecithin, vitamin and mineral premixes, and other additives such as binders, attractants, enzymes, and growth promoters. All aquaculture shrimp production in Venezuela is 100 percent antibiotic-free.

Picture 2: Shrimp Feed Mill near Maracaibo, Zulia State

Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Table 6: Estimated Raw Material Requirements for Shrimp Feed Production in Venezuela, 2021

Product	Inclusion Rate %	Requirements for 10,000 MT of Feed	Requirements for 52,500 MT of Feed
Wheat Flour	35	3,500	18,375
Soybean Meal	20	2,000	10,500
Fish Meal	25	2,500	13,125

Source: FAS Caracas

Shrimp Processing

There are 12 shrimp processing plants in the country, seven in the western region with an installed capacity of 350 MT per day and four in the eastern region with a capacity of 50 MT per day. Shrimp producers who are not vertically integrated sell their products directly to processing companies, which manage exports. Vertically integrated companies transport the production to their processing plants and

export it directly. Shrimp is exported headless, skinless, whole or in pieces, cooked or fresh, chilled, or frozen, depending on the market.

Shrimp Trade

The value of Venezuelan shrimp exports has grown by 167.7 percent since 2016, totaling $184.9 million in 2021. Shrimp exports accounted for 51.1 percent of seafood exports and 27.7 percent of total agricultural exports in 2021. The primary market was the European Union, with 86.6 percent in 2021. Exports to this destination have increased more than 200 percent since 2016 due to the completion of quality certifications that the Venezuelan industry has obtained in recent years.

Since its beginnings in the late 1990s, the Venezuelan shrimp industry exported more than 90 percent of its production to the United States. However, the loss of competitiveness in that market and lower prices have influenced a major decrease in exports, from $27.1 million in 2019 to merely $6.9 million in 2021.

On April 30, 2020, the U.S. Department of State suspended the certification of wild-caught shrimp from Venezuela, making it ineligible for export to the United States. As a result, since then, wild-caught shrimp is not processed for export and is intended for the local market.

Table 7: Volume of Venezuelan Shrimp Exports by Country, 2016 – 2021 (MT)

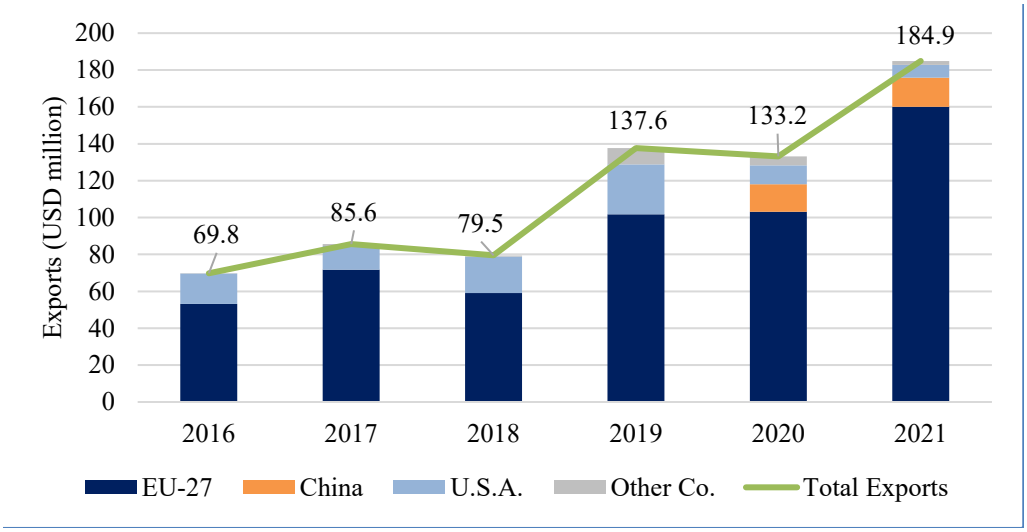
Country	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% In 2021	% CHG 2016-2021
EU-27	9,948	12,167	11,473	20,256	20,864	27,895	84.7	180%
China	-	-	-	-	3,817	3,549	10.8	-
U.S.A.	2,903	2,075	3,593	5,125	2,132	1,137	3.4	-61%
Other Co.	39	232	128	2,248	1,108	369	1.1	847%
Total	**12,891**	**14,474**	**15,195**	**27,629**	**27,922**	**32,950**	**-**	**156%**
$ Price per Mt	5,419	5,915	5,230	4,980	4,770	5,611	-	4%

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Picture 3: Venezuelan Shrimp Packages in a Local Supermarket in Maracaibo, Venezuela

Source: FAS Caracas

Figure 5: Value of Venezuelan Shrimp Exports by Country, 2016 – 2021 (USD million)



Source: Trade Data Monitor

Picture 4: Shrimp Cultivation Pond in Zulia State

Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Picture 5: Shrimp Cultivation Pond in Zulia State

Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Picture 6: Shrimp Sample

Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Picture 7: Shrimp Sample

Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Venezuelan Blue Crab: A Staple Export to the United States

Unlike the highly industrialized sector of shrimp production, crab fishing is entirely artisanal with specialized local companies conducting processing and exports. There are 14 crab processing plants in the country, most of which are in Zulia state, located on the coast of Lake Maracaibo. This industry's primary crab meat products are backfin (jumbo lump), lump, special, claw, and cocktail fingers. Crab producers/fishers sell their products directly to processing companies, which oversee the export side.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture regulates crab fishing, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration monitors, through contractors, processing for export to the United States. Most of the processing and exporting plants are affiliated with the Venezuelan Association of Crab Processors (Asociación Venezolana de Productores e Industriales de Cangrejo-AVEPIC).

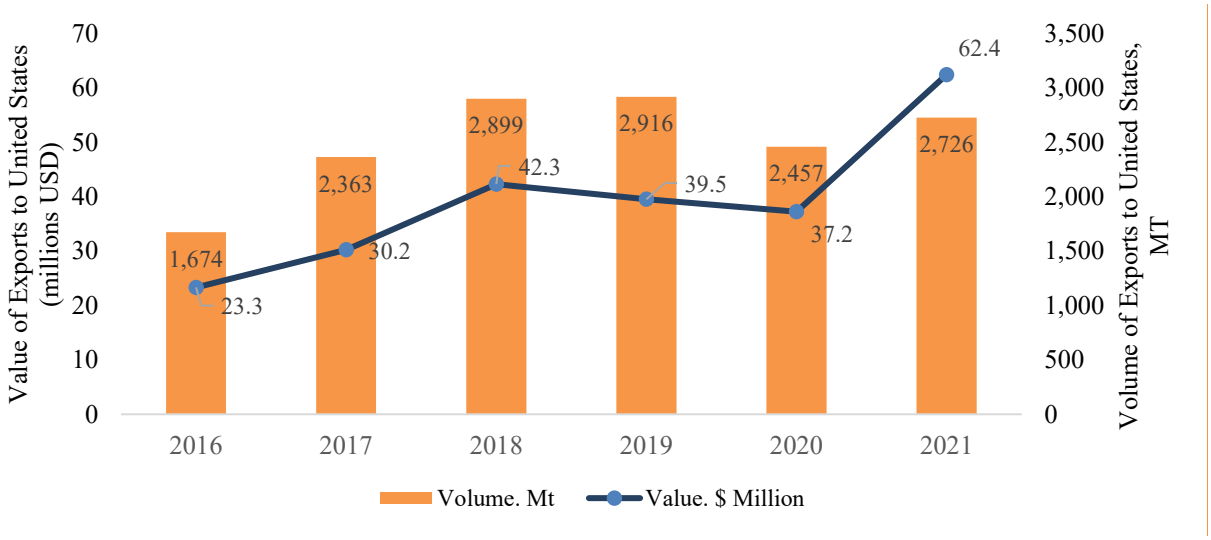
More than 95 percent of crab production in Venezuela is exported, with the United States being the only market. Crab is exported whole or in pieces, cooked or fresh, chilled, or frozen, depending on the destination. Some products are shipped via airfreight to the United States. Venezuelan crab meat processing facilities having long-standing relationships with distributors in Florida. Blue crab is the most valuable seafood product exported to the United States. In 2021, Venezuelan blue crab exports totaled 2,726 MT ($62.42 million), growing 67.7 percent in value and 10.9 percent in volume from 2020, driven by an increase in the export price of more than 50 percent. Blue crab accounted for 35.8 percent of the total value of Venezuelan agricultural exports to the United States in 2021.

Table 8: Price per MT of Crab, 2016-2021

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% CHG 2016-2021
$ Price per MT Crab	13,950	12,786	14,608	13,550	15,146	22,895	64%

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Figure 6: Volume and Value of Venezuelan Crab Exports to the United States, 2016 to 2021



Data source: Trade Data Monitor

Statement for the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission

From

Chesapeake Bay Seafood Industries Association

Presented by Bill Sieling

On July 17th

The CBSIA has requested time to address the TFAC on the dangers facing the crab meat processing industry today and in the future. Because of a long-term shortage of domestic crab meat pickers, mostly due the population demographics in our rural tidewater counties, the industry has had to rely on foreign H2-B guest workers for many years. Ten years ago, this labor supply became very unreliable because of a very unrealistic 66,000 visa cap imposed by the original legislation creating the H2-B visa program. This problem has only gotten worse, despite occasional expansions of the visa cap. Now H2-B users must depend on a Department of Labor lottery to find out if they received workers or not.

This uncertainty of labor supply has already caused many companies out of business and still has not been fixed despite many efforts by the industry and friendly legislators in Congress. Until this issue is fixed our few remaining companies face a yearly dilemma of weather to plan to work or not to work. At present there is no immediate solution in sight.

The second major danger facing our industry is the importation of very low-priced foreign crab meat, principally from Venezuela , which is decimating our domestic processors in the marketplace. This foreign product is being sold at prices so low that we cannot even afford to pick the crab meat at the prices it is being sold for in retail outlets.

This product is also benefiting from a new high pressure treatment process that often extends its shelf life to a period even longer than our domestic product. Maryland's crab meat has high meat quality and long shelf life guaranteed by our "one-of-a-kind quality control and inspection program" conducted by the University of Maryland Sea Grant Program and the Chesapeake Bay Seafood Industries Association. This voluntary program, supported by processing industry industry fees, and watermen's fees, assures buyers of our product a shelf life at least as long as the foreign pressure treated crab meat and a much higher level of good taste.

On top of these two issues there is the ever-present uncertainty of the supply of crabs available for picking and the constantly changing regulatory situation also makes it difficult to plan from year to year. This situation makes the price processors must pay for crabs very

problematic which in turn makes the price they need to receive for their product, to make a profit, also very uncertain.

All these conditions are creating a very hostile environment for our crab meat processors and watermen who depend on the processors to buy their less desirable crabs which they cannot sell for the basket trade.

We, the processing industry, are asking the TFAC to give their blessing to finding solutions to these issues and then pass these concerns of our industry onto the Secretary of the DNR and then onto the Governor himself. I truly believe that unless something is done in the very near future, we will have a very diminished processing industry in the very near future.

I thank you for the time and attention, my fellow TFAC commissioners, in listening to these problems facing our crab meat processing industry. Anything that you can do to help us is critical to our survival.