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The Chesapeake Bay Program's Invasive Catfish Workgroup: Tackling the blue catfish problem

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The Invasive Catfish Workgroup

- Under the Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team of the Chesapeake Bay Program
- Tasked with sharing information to inform the management of invasive catfish (mostly Blue catfish) throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
- Group includes state managers, government, scientists, recreational and charter anglers, commercial watermen, processors, marketing specialists and more



Photo Credit: Chesapeake Bay Program

Invasive Catfish Workgroup

- Management strategy published in 2020
 - Reduce biomass by developing/expanding the fishery
- Updated Goal Statement in 2024
- Established specific small teams and action plan in 2024
 - Recreational Fishing and Charter Captains
 - Policy
 - Science and Management
 - Commercial Fishing, Processing and Marketing
- Coordinated funding for research and marketing studies



Invasive Catfish Workgroup Goal

"By 2029, develop management strategies to minimize the spread and ecological impacts of invasive catfishes in the Chesapeake Bay. The management strategies will use the best available science and consider the diverse interests of stakeholders, support ecosystem health, and increase public awareness"



Small Team Priorities

- Recreational Fishing and Charter Captains
 - Keeping the trophy aspect of the fishery a part of any Management strategy
- Policy
 - Advocating for bills that increase the market for Blue catfish within the watershed
- Science and Management
 - Identify tributary specific management research priorities while developing consistent sampling methods throughout the watershed.
- Commercial Fishing, Processing and Marketing
 - Increase commercial harvest landings, dockside value processing capacity, and grow additional domestic and international markets to reduce blue catfish biomass in the Bay and support local economies.