

INVASIVE CATFISH TASK FORCE REPORT – STAC REVIEW

The Invasive Catfish Task Force (ICTF) was established in 2012 by the CBP's Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team and tasked with identifying management options that could be applied Bay-wide to respond to the spread of invasive Blue and Flathead catfish

- Draft Report with 7 recommendations (Feb 2014)

The Fisheries GIT requested a review of the ICTF report and recommendations by the STAC (April 2014)

INVASIVE CATFISH TASK FORCE REPORT – CONTENT

The report outlined 7 recommendations to address 4 objectives:

1. To slow and reduce the spread of invasive catfishes populations into currently uninhabited waters
2. To minimize the ecological impacts of invasive catfishes on native species
3. To promote a large-scale fishery to significantly reduce abundance of invasive catfishes populations and provide economic benefits to the region; and
4. To increase outreach and education to improve public awareness that Blue and Flathead catfishes are not native and pose a risk to native species and to continue to lessen the probability of unauthorized introductions into other water bodies in the Bay

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Targeted fishery independent removals
2. Develop large-scale commercial fishery
3. Incentivize increased commercial harvest by small boat operations using electrofishing gear
4. Establish monitoring programs
5. Risk-benefit consideration of barrier removal
6. Review of current fishing policies and regulations across jurisdictions
7. Coordinated, consistent outreach communication to improve public awareness

REQUEST TO STAC

Requested that review focus on the following questions:

1. Are the recommendations reasonable given what we currently know about invasive catfish biology and ecology?
2. Which recommendations are most likely to support the stated outcomes (reduce impacts on native species and slow spread)?
3. Which recommendations will have the most impact given the level of scientific uncertainty regarding invasive catfish biology and ecology?
4. Do the reviewers support/endorse the report as sound policy for beginning to manage invasive catfish in the Chesapeake Bay?
5. Do the reviewers suggest any additional management options?

REVIEW PANEL

STAC members:

- **Mike Ford**
- **Tom Ihde**
- **Donna Bilkovic**

External reviewers and expertise:

- **Tim Bonvechio (GA DNR)** – Senior Fisheries Biologist; *expertise with invasive flathead catfish removal & management*
- **Cindy Kolar (USGS)** – USGS Science Advisor, Fisheries and Invasive Species Programs; *expertise in invasive fishes*
- **John Odenkirk (VDGIF)** – Fisheries Biologist; *expertise in invasive species in Bay watershed including northern snakehead*
- **Susan Pasko (NOAA)** – NOAA's Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator; *expertise in harvest control of invasive fish*

REVIEWER CHARGE

For each recommendation presented in the report, we asked reviewers to answer the following three questions:

1. Is this recommendation technically feasible? That is, is the proposed action reasonable based on previous use of the technique or current understanding of the science?
2. What is, in your opinion, the likelihood of success of this approach?
3. Do you see any potential unintended effects that might appear as a result of the proposed course of action?

REVIEWER CHARGE

Two Additional Questions:

1. If you think there are other science or management approaches to consider for this issue, please describe them.
2. What, in your opinion, are the top 3 research challenges related to this problem? Would you offer any strategies to overcome these challenges?

REVIEW TIMELINE

- **July 7, 2014** - Start of Review - 3 weeks to submit final comments
- **September 19, 2014** - Draft final review report
- **October 3, 2014** - Final review and edits by Natalie Gardner
- **October 10, 2014** - One week review by the STAC
- **October 17, 2014** - Final review by CRC
- **October 24, 2014** - Embargoed review product due to CBP Management, GIT Chairs, and Staff
- **October 31, 2014** - Final review product due to CBP Partnership (GIT 1)