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SUBJECT TO CHANGE

FINAL REVISIONS AND APPROVAL WILL BE MADE BY THE FISHERIES GIT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

INVASIVE CATFISH TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

DRAFT

Sustainable Fisheries Goal
Implementation Team Meeting

June 18, 2013

Chesapeake Bay Program
A Watershed Partnership

INVASIVE CATFISH TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

- Bruce Vogt (NCBO)
- Geoffrey Smith (PFBC)
- Matt Fisher (DE - DNREC)
- Nancy Butowski (MD DNR)
- Mary Groves (MD DNR)
- Steve Vilnit (MD DNR)
- Danny Ryan (DC DOE)
- Ellen Cosby (PRFC)
- Mary Fabrizio (VIMS)
- Robert Hale (VIMS)
- Greg Garman (VCU)
- Bob Greenlee (VDGIF)
- Joe Grist (VMRC)
- Mike Hutt (VA Marine Products Board)
- Andrew Turner (NCBO/Versar)
- Howard Townsend (NCBO)

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TASK FORCE CHARGE

- Develop a bay-wide plan that provides management strategies and actions to respond to the spread of invasive catfish populations and the likely ecological and economic impacts associated with this spread
  - recommend specific actions that each jurisdiction can take to address invasive catfish;
  - seek to apply the latest scientific findings and geospatial tools; and
  - build on existing outreach and education efforts to create a consistent public message

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WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

- Held three conference calls to develop and build consensus around a set of recommendations and actions
- Drafting a "Chesapeake Bay Invasive Catfish Response Plan" that summarizes current research and management and lays out recommended actions (Final expected in July)

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STRATEGY

1) Reduce abundance in established populations of invasive catfishes where feasible

2) Mitigate further spread of invasive catfishes

3) Improve awareness and communication of invasive catfish risks to the public and anglers

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Note: Each of the recommendations will require extensive discussion prior to implementation, broad cooperation among agencies, and a willingness to adapt strategies to new information as it becomes available.

1) REDUCE ABUNDANCE IN ESTABLISHED POPULATIONS OF INVASIVE CATFISHES WHERE FEASIBLE

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REDUCE INVASIVE CATFISH POPULATIONS THROUGH TARGETED REMOVAL PROGRAMS.

- **Action 1 (consensus).** Target fishery independent removal of invasive catfish in places of high ecological value.
- **Pro:** Reduces abundance and helps mitigate impacts of invasive catfish on native species.
- **Con:** Could be costly and not have a significant impact. Disposal of removed fish is also an issue (Food banks and industrial uses should be investigated).

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REDUCE INVASIVE CATFISH (PRIMARILY BLUE CATFISH) POPULATIONS BY DEVELOPING A MARKET

- **Action 1 (consensus).** Develop a fishery by creating a consistent market for Chesapeake Bay Blue Catfish through marketing campaigns that promote the fishery.

- Pro: Helps reduce abundance. May improve commercial fishing for native species like striped bass.

- Con: Risk of conflicting objectives, incentive to move fish, health concerns.

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REDUCE INVASIVE CATFISH (PRIMARILY BLUE CATFISH) POPULATIONS BY INCREASING FISHING PRESSURE THROUGH SMALL SCALE COMMERCIAL HARVESTS

- **Action 2 (consensus).** Incentivize commercial harvests by providing free licenses for the capture and sale of invasive catfishes to small boat operations.

- Pro: Helps reduce populations and mitigate impacts on native species. Provides economic opportunities by increased access to the fishery.

- Con: Risk of conflicting objectives

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REDUCE INVASIVE CATFISH POPULATIONS BY INCREASING FISHING PRESSURE THROUGH LARGE SCALE COMMERCIAL HARVESTS.

- **Action 3 (consensus).** Support experimental use of electrofishing for commercial harvest.
- Pro: Helps reduce abundance and mitigate impacts on native species.
- Con: Risk of conflicting objectives.

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2) MITIGATE FURTHER SPREAD OF INVASIVE CATFISHES

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PROTECT ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE AREAS FROM THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE CATFISH

- **Action1 (Consensus).** Establish and maintain Freshwater Protected Areas (FPAs) in High-Risk, High-Value Locations.
- Pro: Provides refuge for native species
- Con: Removals will likely be costly and will likely need to continue in perpetuity. Methods like electrofishing may not be effective in reducing numbers to levels that have a measurable ecological benefit.

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PROTECT ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE AREAS FROM THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE CATFISH

- **Action 2 (consensus).** Strategically retain existing barriers to limit further expansion of invasive catfishes.
- Pro: Limits ability of invasive catfish to spread and fosters collaboration among fishery managers and habitat restoration specialists.
- Con: Tradeoffs with shad, herring and eel recovery efforts.

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PROTECT ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE AREAS FROM THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE CATFISH

- **Action 3 (consensus).** Establish early detection programs at high ecological value sites and places where invasion is likely.
- Pro: Provides near-real time distribution and status of invasive species
- Con: Requires long-term agency commitment and interagency coordination

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IMPROVE DATA SHARING AND COMMUNICATION WITH COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN

- **Action 1 (consensus).** Convene a workshop with commercial fishers who are currently harvesting the invasive catfish directly or indirectly.
- Pro: Improved understanding and shared awareness
- Con: None identified

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RECONSIDER POLICIES THAT MAY BE INCENTIVIZING HUMAN AIDED SPREAD OF INVASIVE CATFISH AND SUPPORTING POPULATION GROWTH

- **Action 12 (consensus).** Managers should discuss the tradeoffs associated with maintenance of trophy fisheries for invasive species.

- Pro: Promotes open dialogue among managers about tradeoffs (value of the trophy fishery vs. risk of invasives)

- Con: None

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ENFORCE POLICIES ALREADY IN PLACE TO MITIGATE SPREAD

- **Action 1 (consensus).** Aggressively enforce current regulations that prohibit possession and transport of invasive catfish

- Pro: Ensures current policies are effectively mitigating spread.

- Con: None

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IMPROVE AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATION OF INVASIVE CATFISH RISKS TO THE PUBLIC AND ANGLERS

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MAKE INFORMATION ON INVASIVE CATFISH MORE ACCESSIBLE, CONSISTENT, AND CLEARER TO ANGLERS AND THE PUBLIC

- **Action 1.** (consensus) Ensure consistency across jurisdictional web pages highlighting the NO TRANSPORT regulations and providing explicit information on the potential impacts of invasives.

- Pro: A consistent, credible, easily-accessed web page on invasive catfishes in Chesapeake Bay that is supported by all jurisdictions is important for success of any control or mitigation program.

- Con: None

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MAKE INFORMATION ON INVASIVE CATFISH MORE ACCESSIBLE, CONSISTENT, AND CLEARER TO ANGLERS AND THE PUBLIC

- **Action 2.** (consensus) Aggressively campaign to increase public awareness (posters at boat ramps, websites, social media, anglers logs, bait and tackle shops, taking journalists on field trips, and communicating research results)

- Pro: Improves public awareness

- Con: None

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CONTINUE TO IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF INVASIVE CATFISH

- **Action 1 (consensus).** Create one-stop shopping for invasive catfish information.

- Pro: Easily accessible information that informs researchers and the interested public with consistent messaging, aids decision making by management entities, and promotes research and analysis by scientists.

- Con: Cost of upkeep for the database and website

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CONTINUE TO IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF INVASIVE CATFISH

- **Action 2 (consensus).** Continue to support applied fisheries research on invasive catfish in the region.
- Pro: Help refine management strategies
- Con: Cost

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ADDITIONAL ACTIONS WITHOUT TASK FORCE CONSENSUS

- **Action 1 (non consensus).** Work with local conservation and fishing organizations to hold fishing derbies for invasive catfish aimed at removing fish at selected locations (i.e. smaller tributaries, places of high ecological value, and where colonization is recent) and to raise public awareness.

- Pro: Raises public awareness and could help reduce abundance.

- Con: Conflict with trophy fishery and may not significantly reduce abundance.

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ADDITIONAL ACTIONS WITHOUT TASK FORCE CONSENSUS

- **Action 2 (non consensus).** Jurisdictions can institute a baywide or jurisdiction specific "kill on capture" to help remove fish from the system and raise awareness.

- Pro: Highly visible

- Con: Potential backlash from the trophy angler community and may not have impact on abundance.

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