

LIS SUMMARY AS INTRODUCED – HB2782 (Simonds)

Board of Wildlife Resources; creel limits; blue catfish. Requires the Board of Wildlife Resources to amend regulations to remove the one-fish daily limit for blue catfish longer than 32 inches in the tidal waters of the James, Rappahannock, and York Rivers and their tributaries below the fall line.

LIS SUMMARY AS PASSED (FINAL AMENDMENTS) – HB2782 (Simonds)

Board of Wildlife Resources; creel limits; blue catfish. Requires the Board of Wildlife Resources to amend regulations to remove the one-fish daily limit for blue catfish longer than 32 inches in the Commonwealth.

GOVERNOR'S VETO (HB2782 – Simonds)

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6 of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 2782, which amends regulations to allow anglers to keep unlimited numbers of blue catfish larger than 32" statewide.

Although there are concerns about the overpopulation of blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its associated waterways, requiring the Department of Wildlife Resources to amend their regulations related to catfish statewide does not consider the vibrant recreational fisheries and associated economic benefits. Reviewing the benefit for recreational fisherman, as well as the possible negative impact of the species, should be at the discretion of the Department of Wildlife Resources.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

2025 SESSION

LEGISLATION NOT PREPARED BY DLS
INTRODUCED

25105342D

HOUSE BILL NO. 2782

Offered January 17, 2025

A BILL to amend 4VAC15-320-25.

Patrons—Simonds and Kent

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *That the Board of Wildlife Resources shall amend 4VAC15-320-25, Creel and length limits, of the Virginia Administrative Code to remove the one-fish daily limit for blue catfish longer than 32 inches the tidal waters of the James, Rappahannock, and York Rivers and their tributaries below the fall line.*

INTRODUCED

HB2782

2025 SESSION

HOUSE SUBSTITUTE

25106085D

HOUSE BILL NO. 2782

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources
on _____)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Simonds)

A BILL to require the Board of Wildlife Resources to amend regulations relating to creel limits for blue catfish.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *That the Board of Wildlife Resources shall amend 4VAC15-320-25, Creel and length limits, of the Virginia Administrative Code to remove the one-fish daily limit for blue catfish longer than 32 inches in the tidal waters of the James River and its tributaries downstream of the freshwater and saltwater lines at Hog Point and College Creek and the tidal waters of the Rappahannock and York Rivers and their tributaries below the fall line.*

HOUSE SUBSTITUTE

HB2782H1

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2025 Regular Session

HB2782 Blue catfish; Board of Wildlife Resources shall amend
4VAC15-320-25, Creel and length limits.

Subcommittee
Print

**01/27/2025 House of Delegates: Subcommittee recommends reporting with substitute
(10-Y 0-N)**

Subcommittee: Chesapeake

Committee: Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

[Votes](#)

YEAS--Bulova, Herring, Krizek, Clark, Hernandez, Laufer, Ware, Wilt, Webert, Bloxom--10

NAYS--0

ABSTENTIONS--0

NOT VOTING--0

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HB2782 Blue catfish; Board of Wildlife Resources shall amend
4VAC15-320-25, Creel and length limits.

Committee
[Print](#)

**01/29/2025 House of Delegates: Reported from Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural
Resources (22-Y 0-N)**

Committee: Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

[Votes](#)

YEAS--Lopez, Clark, Bulova, Tran, Helmer, Simonds, Willett, Herring, Krizek, Glass,
Hernandez, Laufer, Ware, Wright, Orrock, Marshall, Wilt, Webert, Bloxom, Fowler, Runion,
Kent--22

NAYS--0

ABSTENTIONS--0

NOT VOTING--0

HB2782 Blue catfish; Board of Wildlife Resources shall amend 4VAC15-320-25, Creel and length limits.

02/04/2025 House of Delegates: Read third time and passed House (78-Y 18-N)

Votes

YEAS--Anthony, Askew, Austin, Ballard, Bennett-Parker, Bloxom, Bulova, Callsen, Campbell, Carr, Clark, Cohen, Cole, Convirs-Fowler, Cousins, Davis, Delaney, Ennis, Feggans, Fowler, Gardner, Glass, Green, Hayes, Helmer, Henson, Hernandez, Herring, Higgins, Hodges, Hope, Jones, Kent, Keys-Gamarra, Krizek, Laufer, LeVere Bolling, Lopez, Lovejoy, Maldonado, Martinez, McClure, McQuinn, Milde, Morefield, Mundon King, Obenshain, O'Quinn, Orrock, Owen, Phillips, Price, Rasoul, Reaser, Reid, Runion, Seibold, Sewell, Shin, Sickles, Simon, Simonds, Singh, Sullivan, Tata, Thomas, Torian, Tran, Walker, Ward, Ware, Watts, Webert, Wiley, Willett, Wilt, Wyatt, Mr. Speaker--78

NAYS--Arnold, Batten, Cherry, Cordoza, Coyner, Freitas, Garrett, Gilbert, Griffin, Kilgore, Leftwich, Oates, Scott, P.A., Taylor, Wachsmann, Williams, Wright, Zehr--18

ABSTENTIONS--0

NOT VOTING--Earley, Knight, Marshall, McNamara--4

Delegate Marshall was recorded as not voting. Intended to vote yea.

HB2782 Blue catfish; Board of Wildlife Resources shall amend 4VAC15-320-25, Creel and length limits.

02/11/2025 Senate: Reported from Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources with amendment (14-Y 1-N)

Committee: Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources

Votes

YEAS--Marsden, Obenshain, Stuart, Stanley, Suetterlein, Hashmi, Hackworth, Williams Graves, Perry, Pekarsky, French, Salim, Srinivasan, Roem--14

NAYS--Mulchi--1

ABSTENTIONS--0

HB2782 Blue catfish; Board of Wildlife Resources shall amend 4VAC15-320-25, Creel and length limits.

02/14/2025 Senate: Passed Senate with amendments (35-Y 1-N)

Votes

YEAS--Aird, Bagby, Boysko, Carroll Foy, Cifers, Craig, Deeds, DeSteph, Diggs, Ebbin, Favola, Hackworth, Hashmi, Jordan, Locke, Lucas, Marsden, McDougle, McPike, Peake, Pekarsky, Perry, Pillion, Reeves, Roem, Rouse, Salim, Srinivasan, Stanley, Stuart, Sturtevant, Suetterlein, Surovell, VanValkenburg, Williams Graves--35

NAYS--Mulchi--1

RULE 36--0

NOT VOTING--Durant, French, Head, Obenshain--4

HB2782 Blue catfish; Board of Wildlife Resources shall amend 4VAC15-320-25, Creel and length limits.

02/18/2025 House of Delegates: Senate Amendments agreed to by House (67-Y 30-N)

Votes

YEAS--Anthony, Askew, Austin, Ballard, Bennett-Parker, Bloxom, Bulova, Callsen, Carr, Clark, Cohen, Cole, Convirs-Fowler, Cousins, Delaney, Feggans, Fowler, Gardner, Garrett, Glass, Green, Hayes, Helmer, Henson, Hernandez, Herring, Hodges, Hope, Jones, Kent, Keys-Gamarra, Krizek, Laufer, LeVere Bolling, Lopez, Maldonado, Martinez, McClure, Milde, Mundon King, Obenshain, Orrock, Owen, Price, Rasoul, Reaser, Reid, Runion, Seibold, Sewell, Shin, Sickles, Simon, Simonds, Singh, Sullivan, Tata, Thomas, Torian, Tran, Ward, Watts, Wiley, Willett, Wilt, Wyatt, Mr. Speaker--67

NAYS--Arnold, Batten, Campbell, Cherry, Cordoza, Coyner, Davis, Earley, Ennis, Freitas, Gilbert, Griffin, Higgins, Kilgore, Leftwich, Lovejoy, McNamara, Morefield, Oates, O'Quinn, Phillips, Scott, P.A., Taylor, Wachsmann, Walker, Ware, Webert, Williams, Wright, Zehr--30

ABSTENTIONS--0

NOT VOTING--Knight, Marshall, McQuinn--3

Delegate Knight was recorded as not voting. Intended to vote nay.

Delegate Marshall was recorded as not voting. Intended to vote nay.

2025 SESSION

ENROLLED

ENROLLED

HB2782ER

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend 4VAC15-320-25.

[H 2782]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *That the Board of Wildlife Resources shall amend 4VAC15-320-25, Creel and length limits, of the Virginia Administrative Code to remove the one-fish daily limit for blue catfish longer than 32 inches in the Commonwealth.*

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HB2782

Highlight Proposed Changes

(HB2782)

GOVERNOR'S VETO

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Although there are concerns about the overpopulation of blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its associated waterways, requiring the Department of Wildlife Resources to amend their regulations related to catfish statewide does not consider the vibrant recreational fisheries and associated economic benefits. Reviewing the benefit for recreational fisherman, as well as the possible negative impact of the species, should be at the discretion of the Department of Wildlife Resources.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Health advisories

Rappahannock - I-95 bridge downstream, less than or equal to 2 meals/month,

York River – Pamunkey – upstream 72 miles from confluence with Mattoponi, less than or equal to 2 meals/month

James – downstream of fall line – No consumption for fish greater 32”

James – downstream of fall line – less than or equal to 2 meals/month < 32”

As general rule, larger fish have more contaminants

Creel Limits

All tidal rivers – 2006 was when only 1>32” went into effect

Rappahannock was removed effective January 1, 2017 – found no large fish in samples

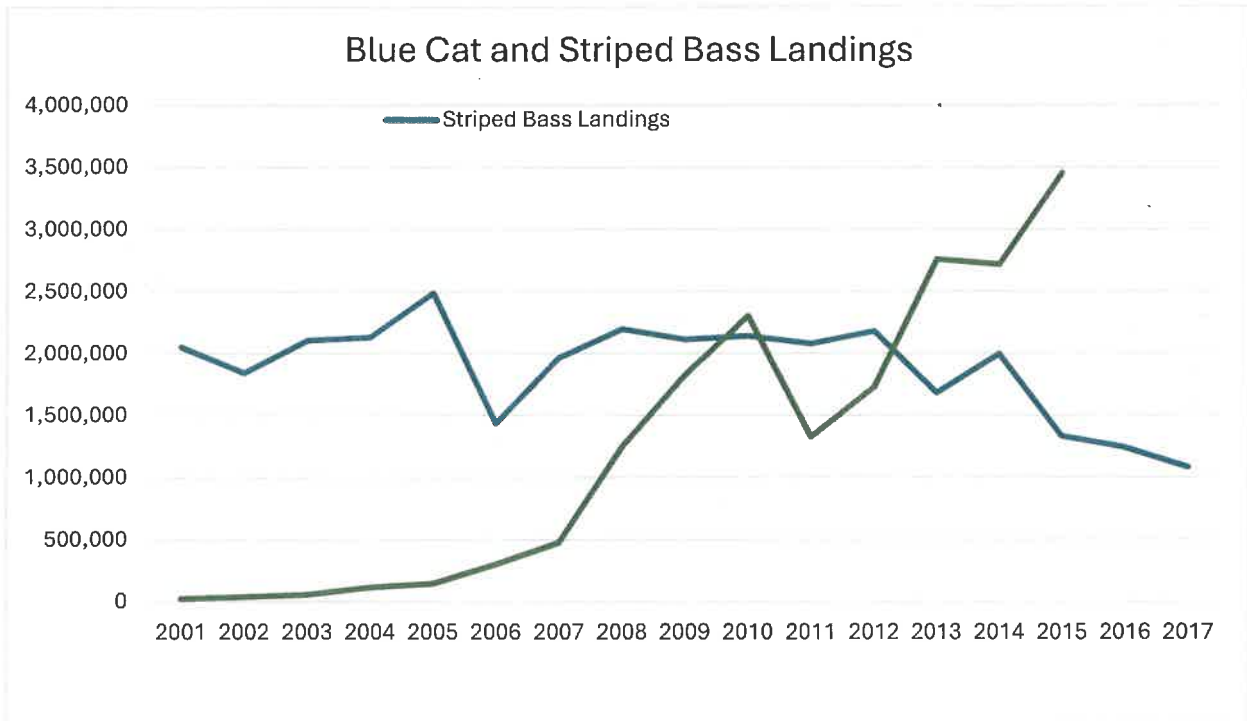
Rappahannock added back on January 1, 2021 – anglers reported large fish in catches

Regulation for **Kerr** and **Gaston** modified for consistency with North Carolina circa 2019

MRC Commercial Fishery

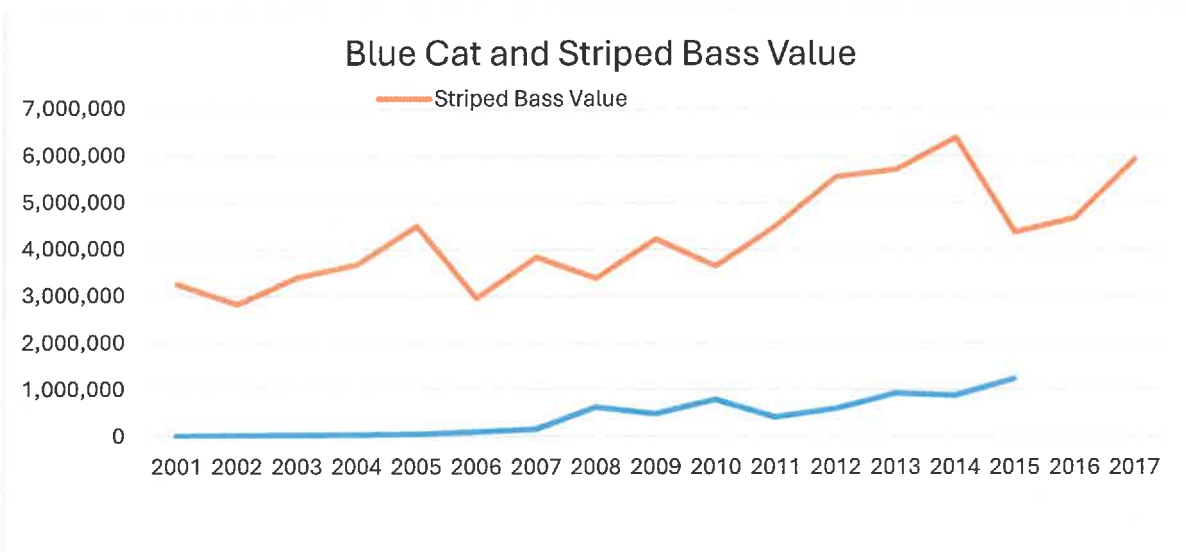
Generally fish pots and nets, limited electrofishing – three permits. Landings higher than striped bass, value much lower.

Landings



Source, NMFS. Blue line – Striped Bass Landing. Green Line – Blue Catfish Landings

Value



Source, NMFS. Orange line – Striped Bass Value. Blue Line – Blue Catfish Value

Environmental Community

The environmental community is concerned about the impacts of blue catfish to other resources in the Chesapeake Bay. Blue catfish are very abundant and diet studies indicate that they eat a lot of different things. Concern in particular focuses on blue crab, striped bass, and Atlantic menhaden. Removal of blue catfish is viewed as steps towards improving the populations of economically and ecologically important species in the Bay. However, Hilling et al. estimated that blue catfish predation on blue crabs in the James was equivalent to 4.2% of statewide commercial harvest, striped bass were infrequently consumed, and that predation on menhaden was a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of metric tonnes caught by commercial fishermen.

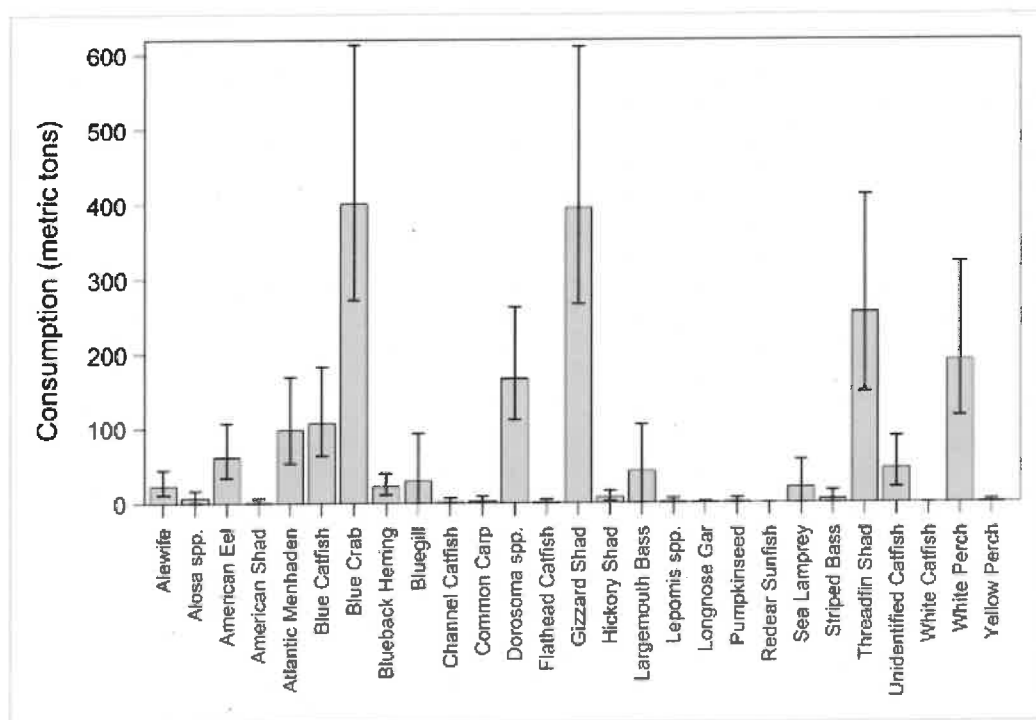


FIGURE 6

[Open in figure viewer](#) | [PowerPoint](#)

Estimates of total population prey consumption by James River Blue Catfish in 2015 for select prey taxa of conservation concern and fishery management interest. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Scientific names are provided in Table 1.