



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary

March 3, 2021

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – House Bill 693 – Cecil County – Fishing – Restrictions

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources offers the following information on House Bill 693. This bill removes restrictions on the use of pound nets in Cecil County, including the Susquehanna River, allows for the setting of nets without the permission of the shore owner, and removes fishing prohibitions during the regular duck season.

Allowing pound nets in the Susquehanna River may have negative effects on the spawning activities of striped bass, herring, and shad. While it is difficult to quantify the extent to which those species spawning activities would be impacted due to many factors such as the number of nets, the exact location of the nets, and the time the nets were set, it is likely that if pound nets were allowed to be set in the Susquehanna River striped bass, herring, and shad could be negatively impacted. While the striped bass season is not open during the spawning period, it is expected that spawning fish would be caught in pound nets where handling stress can occur. Handling stress on spawning fish leads to a failure to spawn, even if the fish are eventually released.

Coast-wide, herring and shad stocks are currently depleted. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is preparing to move forward with efforts to identify paths to improve those stocks. These efforts will include reducing bycatch of herring and shad throughout the Chesapeake Bay. There is currently no open season for these fish and they would likely be caught in any pound nets set in the Susquehanna.

HB 693 may also create additional resource conflicts by allowing nets to be set within 200 yards of the beach at Elk Neck State Park, or by allowing fishing from

a vessel during the duck season in tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay where that activity has historically been restricted.

Thank you for allowing the department to submit this information on HB 693 for the committee's careful consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

James W. McKitrick
Director, Legislative and Constituent Services