



ICW Policy Small Group Meeting: June 2025

Wednesday, June 25 · 2:00pm – 2:30pm EST

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/aig-sehp-yzc>

Or dial: (US) +1 614-706-6967 PIN: 701 240 419#

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Allison Colden (CBF), Brent Hunsinger (FOR), Connor Bevan (ASA), Matthew Scales (MDA), Shelby White (VIMS), Adrienne Kotula (CBC), Bruce Vogt (NOAA), Christina Garvey (CRC)

ACTION ITEM: Share [catfish survey](#) with any networks, contacts, etc. in the York River area to increase response rates.

2:00pm - 2:05pm

Introduction (Allison Colden)

- Last meeting focused on draft catfish bill so this meeting will be more focused on member updates
- Round robin for everyone to introduce themselves

2:05pm - 2:15pm

Blue Catfish Marketing Workgroup Meeting Debrief (Brent Hunsinger)

- VA Blue Catfish Marketing workgroup - includes government agencies GA members, watershed nonprofits, seafood industry reps, ,
- Purpose= to create a market for blue catfish & identify potential sectors for blue catfish market
- Workgroup not confined to VA - includes representation from MD (MD and VA working together is critical to build a market - domestic and international)
- Last meeting was held at the VMRC office - purpose of the meeting was to discuss final recommendations

- Recommendations/report is not finalized
- Next meeting is to finalize the report (July)
- Opportunity to taste blue catfish cake - by Tilghman Island Seafood Inc.
 - Designed for schools, corrections
 - *Matthew Scales (in the chat)*: Yes the cake is for schools, and on a bun for kids
 - Feedback - need bigger lumps of fish and addition of condiments to make it more appealing
 - Matt Scales: partnering with Tilghman Island Seafood Inc.
 - Purchasers from MD county at conference
 - Received a good reaction from cakes
 - Labeling of “catfish cake” = kids **did not** want to eat
 - Labeling of “seafood cake” = kids **did** want to eat it
 - A lot of discussion on value added products
 - Funding - how can we use different portions of the fish?
- Markets:
 - Easing restrictions on cost of meal per person - help increase consumption of catfish
 - Focus on correctional system; no similar cap for school systems
 - Question: assuming that catfish is more expensive than other proteins used?
 - Yes
 - Interesting because it is local
 - MD passed bill regarding 20% requirement of locally sourced food
 - Catfish approved product
 - Recommendation
 - *Matthew Scales (in the chat)*: Second link is the Certified Local Farm & Fish Allison mentioned
<https://onestop.md.gov/forms/true-blue-maryland-607882c182846c01c0e403eb>
<https://mda.maryland.gov/maryland-products/pages/certified-local-farm.aspx>
 - Need to make it worthwhile for harvesters
 - Sarah Elfreth’s Catfish Bill - decision to not include price per pound in the wording of the bill

- Yes, will take out price point - allows for more flexibility and would be part of the grant process
 - Need to work out additional details to make legislation functional (e.g. transportation)
 - Wittman is onboard with Elfreth now
 - Matt spoke with Allie Cavanagh offline - connection with Stephanie Pazzaglia (Chair of MD Seafood Marketing Advisory Council; JJ McDonnell)
 - Stephanie said that they will have a different gameplan on logistics
 - Involvement of processors
 - Connected Allie with pet food company and with Costco (Costco looking at including blue catfish in their Kirkland petfood)
- During VA Blue Catfish Meeting - feeling in the room was that the fisherman association was not very enthusiastic about the bill and use of catfish for pet food industry
 - Shelby White agreed - felt that more interest was in developing the market and branding first - get it on people's plates first
- Promotions:
 - Discussion around sponsored events to show that catfish can be prepared and be tasty
 - Catfish event in Fredericksburg, VA on August 2nd
 - [Rappahannock River Catfish Cookout & Watershed Festival](#)
- International markets:
 - Conversations regarding value added products
- **Overview of key recommendations:**
 - Identify potential funding sources (3 grant programs)
 - Sustainable infrastructure fund
 - Originally for wind energy?
 - Need to clarify
 - Accelerating funding for AFID
 - \$250,000 grant, but only 1 at a time; 2 awarded so far
 - Want multiple grants going out at one time
 - Funding for 1 full-time employee (FTE) - housed at VA marine product board
 - Need someone to write the grants to get money to do branding - grant manager
 - Funding pilot programs for value added

- *Discussion on labeling catfish as “Chesapeake” vs “Virginia wild harvest”*
 - *Recommendation to use “Chesapeake” wild caught blue catfish - consistency for branding across state lines*
 - *Who would hold certification?*
- *Final report out by September 1st*
- *Question: what do you imagine the general assembly doing with the report?*
 - *Broad bi-partisan support for dealing with blue catfish*
 - *No problem getting support - follow through on what the budget will look like the next couple of years is still unsure*
 - *Going through general assembly is good- more follow through there since governor is switching over*

2:15pm - 2:30pm

Member Updates

- *Adrienne Kotula (CBC)*
 - *Continuing to work with Congressman Harris*
 - *Will see if they want to schedule a field trip*
 - *Fortunately there is more support in congress than in the administration*
 - *House Appropriations bill did not include report language requested by the Administration to direct funding away from blue catfish*
- *Bruce Vogt:*
 - *NERTO intern (Veronica Malabanan Lucchese) surveys*
 - *Trouble getting feedback from York River*
 - *Feedback from recreational fishermen - pointing finger at Omega Protein*
 - *Rappahannock River Catfish Cookout & Watershed Festival*
- *Next small group meeting = Wednesday, September 10th @ 2pm*

2:30pm

Adjourn