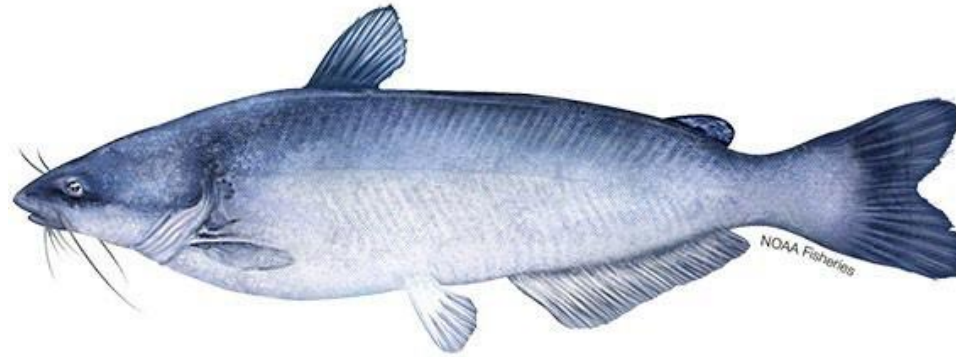


# Virginia / Chesapeake Bay Wild Caught Blue Catfish

Mike Hutt: Executive Director  
Virginia Marine Products Board



# Blue catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*)



## Quick Facts

### **WEIGHT**

Can grow to more than 100 pounds

### **LENGTH**

Average less than 2 feet in length but can grow to 5 feet

### **LIFESPAN**

9 to 10 years, though some have been known to live up to 25 years

### **REGION**

New England/Mid-Atlantic, Southeast

# Blue Catfish



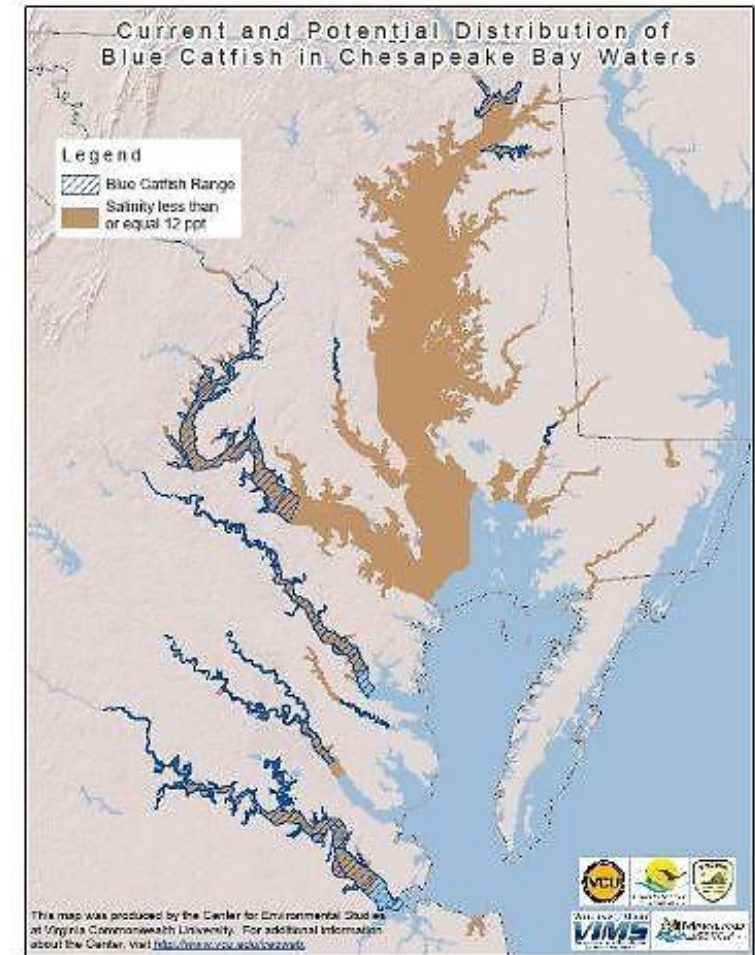
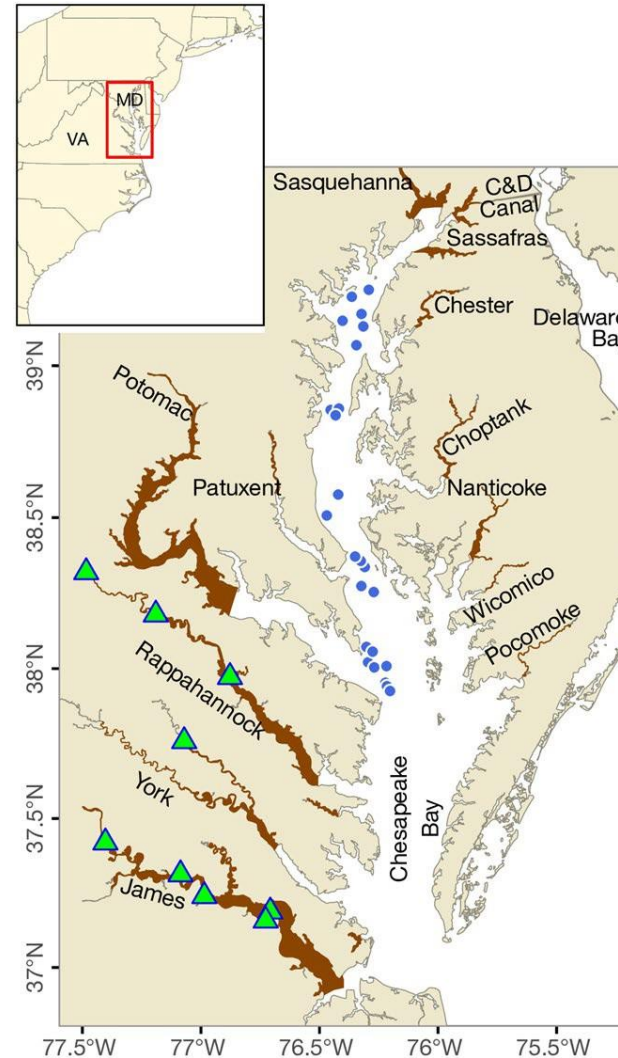
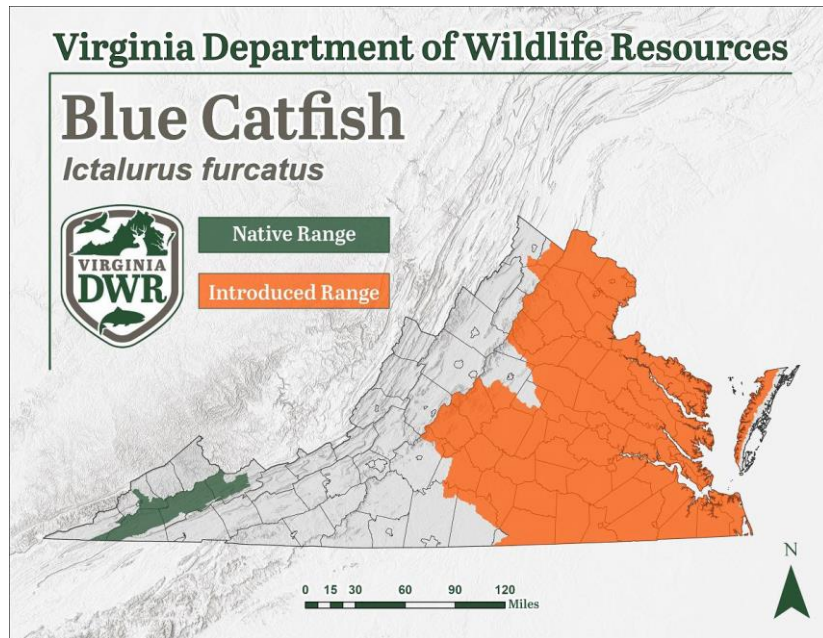
- In the 1970s and 1980s, introduced to the James, Rappahannock, and York river basins in Virginia as a new recreational fishery.
- Apex predator; opportunistic/generalist predator, feeds on important native species: menhaden, shad, herring, blue crabs, oysters, clams; and consume 8-9% of their body weight/day.....
- Adults have few natural predators in the Chesapeake Bay
- Prefer fresher water but can thrive in higher salinities 12 ppt + (increasing?)
- [March 16, 2023: Maryland Governor Wes Moreland asked the federal government to declare a state of disaster to address the proliferation of blue catfish and other invasive fish species living in the Maryland portion of the Chesapeake Bay](#)



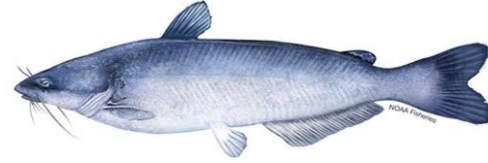
# Blue Catfish



- Invasion status



# Blue Catfish



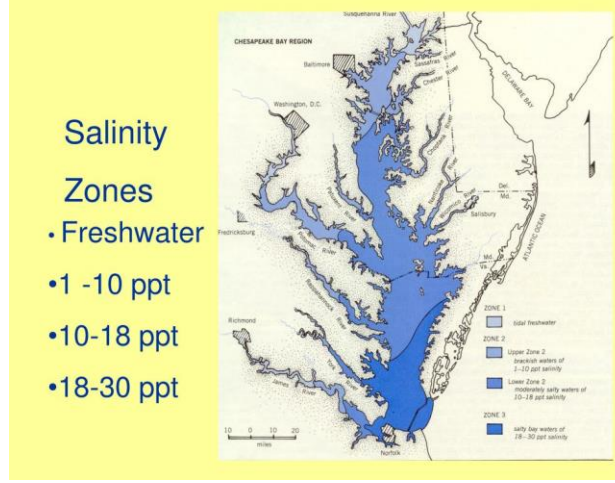
- Represent up to 75% of the biomass in the James, Rappahannock and York rivers on Virginia's western shore of the Chesapeake Bay (Schloesser et al., 2011)
- In 2018 there was an estimated 500 million pounds of blue catfish in the bay, estimating now ~ 700 million lbs., X 8.5% BW/day = 59,000,000 pounds of Crabs, shrimp, fish, oysters and clams.... can be consumed in Chesapeake Bay watershed PER DAY
- NOAA 2020: A new management strategy in the Chesapeake Bay aims to put blue catfish on your plate.
- Blue Catfish fillets provide an abundance of healthy Omega-3 fatty acids (270 mg per serving), especially eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) which are not found in land-based plants and animals products.



# Blue Catfish



- Existential threat to Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Fisheries.



21 ppt Fabrizio et al., 2021



May 2024 Newport News, VA



March 28, 2023. Turkey Point, Md.

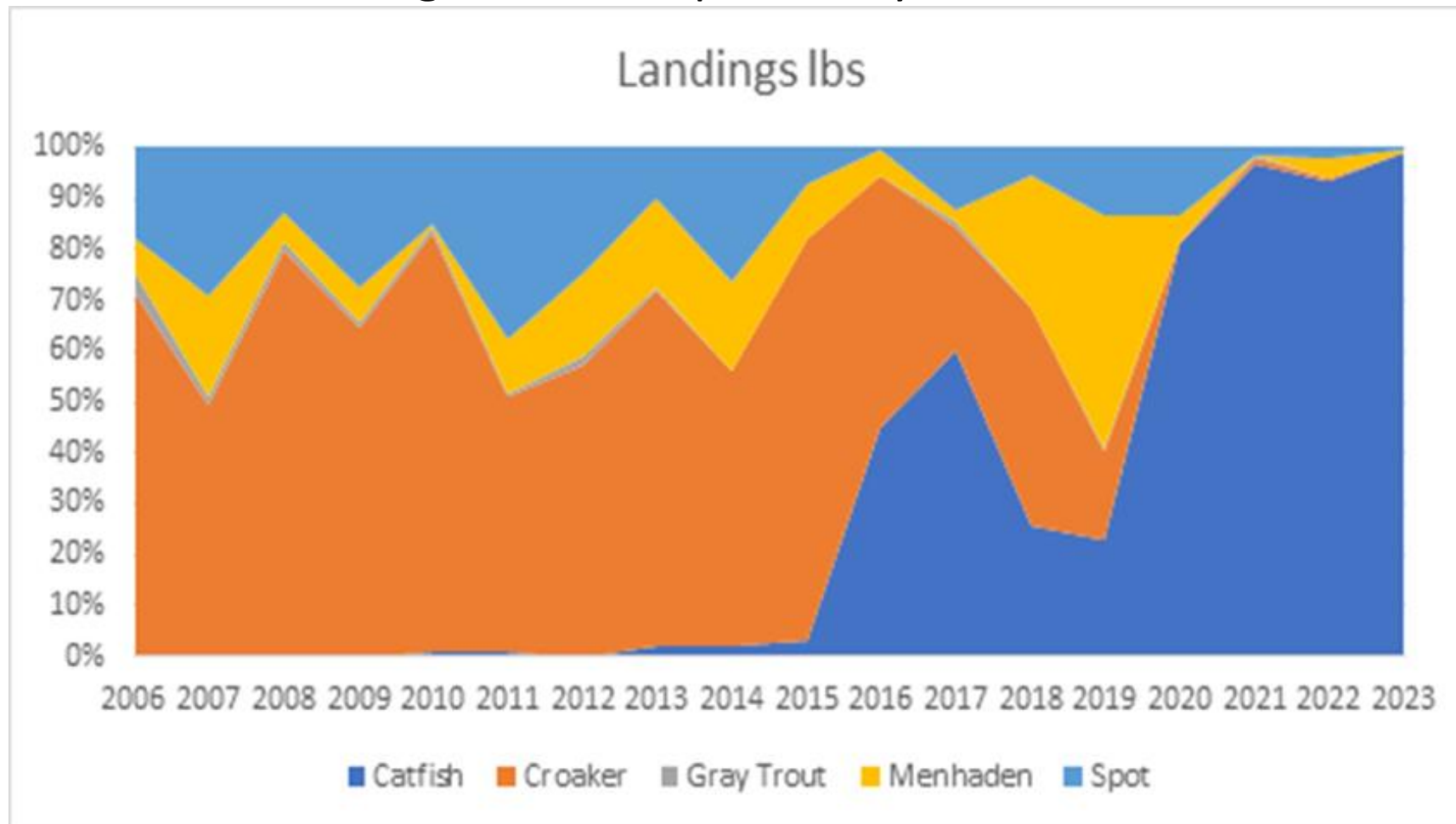


May 2024 Newport News, VA

# Blue Catfish



- Existential threat to Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Fisheries.





# Blue Catfish



- Comprehensive VT Initiative (Harvesting)

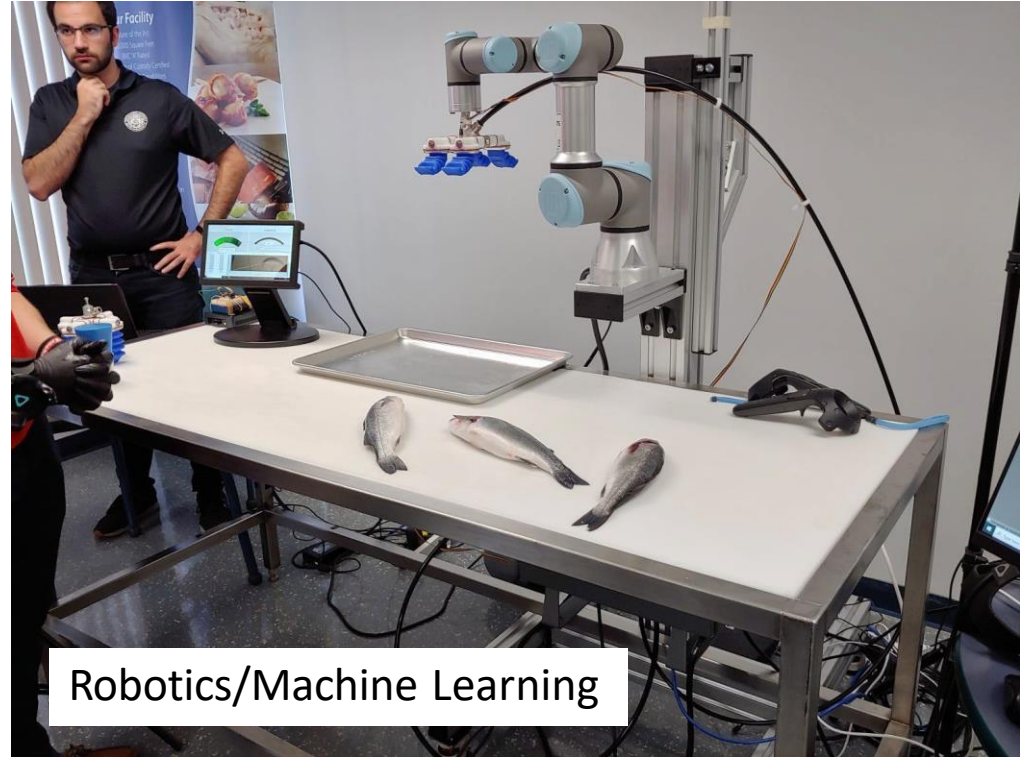




# Blue Catfish



- Comprehensive VT Initiative (Processing)



Robotics/Machine Learning

# Commercial Industry's Response to the Blue Catfish



- Chefs, retail stores and seafood markets are leading the way in consumer demand to help control the population of the Chesapeake Bay Blue Catfish.
- With the commercial harvest and consumption being increased of Chesapeake Bay Blue Catfish it is one way to reduce the numbers of this invasive fish.

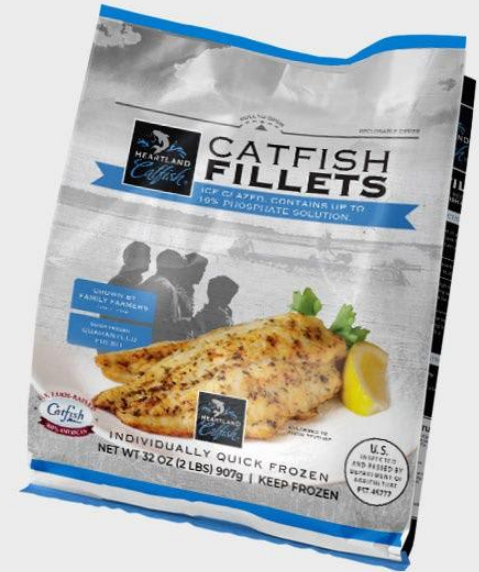
<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
varied servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>4 oz (112g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>90</b>
	<b>% Daily Value*</b>
<b>Total Fat</b> 1.5g	<b>2%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
Polyunsaturated Fat 0.5g	
Monounsaturated Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 60mg	<b>20%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 55mg	<b>2%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 0g	<b>0%</b>
Dietary Fiber 0g	<b>0%</b>
Total Sugars 0g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	<b>0%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 19g	
<b>Vitamin D</b> 1.7mcg	<b>8%</b>
<b>Calcium</b> 10mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Iron</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Potassium</b> 460mg	<b>10%</b>
<small>*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

Nutritional Chart from previous slide.



# Blue Catfish

(Value-add)





## Versatility of the Blue Catfish

As mentioned the Blue Catfish can adhere to many different preparation techniques.

**Pan Seared**

**Blackened**

**Grilled**

Blue Catfish can be served up in all these delicious ways and many more.

**Fried**





# VMPB's Actions on the Blue Catfish

The VMPB is also taking an active role in promoting consumption of the Blue Catfish, being featured as the main item in this year's trade shows, domestically and international.

We've gathered many valuable leads from customers in the region, state, and worldwide throughout the year on the Blue Catfish.

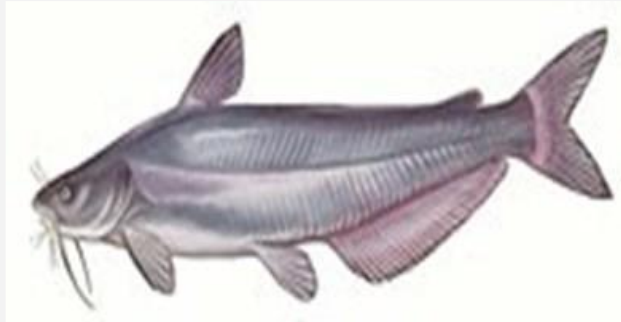


# Blue Catfish



- Next steps
  - Support new coalitions
  - VDACS Blue Catfish Working Group (marketing)
  - Continue close work with Industry, VMPB, VDACS, VMRC, others
  - Funding Initiatives
    - \$10 million USDA-SAS submitted / VT
    - Regional USDA Sustainable Food Systems \$5 mil /VT
    - Assorted internal/external PD funds
    - State and Federal Initiatives
    - Industrial





# In conclusion

In Virginia the commercial watermen have harvested the following number of pounds with the dockside values.

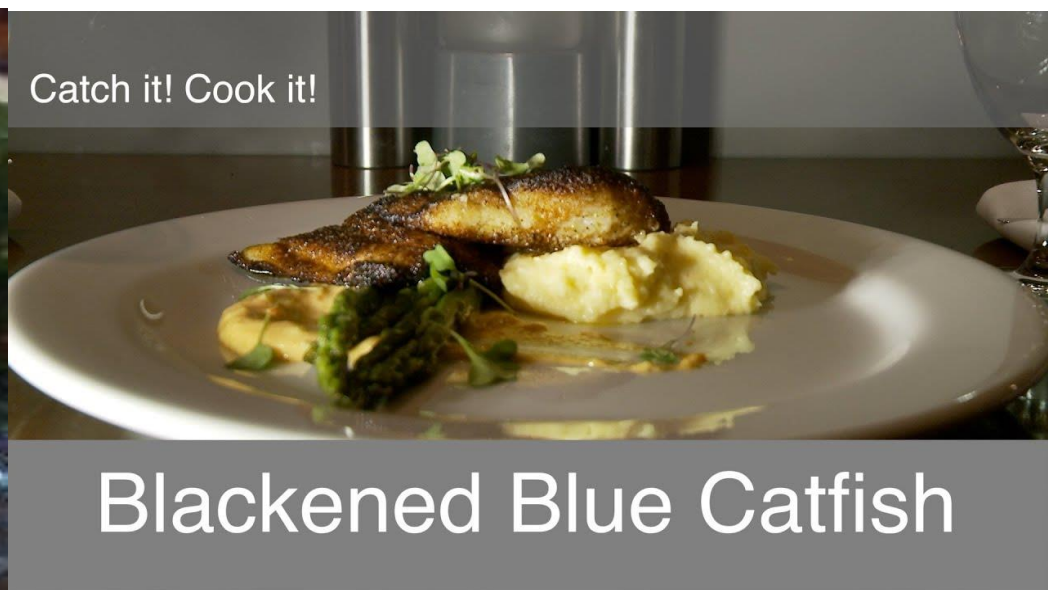
- 2019: 1.98 million lbs and dockside value of \$960,000
  - 2020: 1.54 million lbs and dockside value of \$750,000
  - 2021: 2.47 million lbs and dockside value of \$1.2 million
  - 2022: 2.51 million lbs and dockside value of \$1.2 million
  - 2023: 3.11 million lbs and dockside value of \$1.5 million
- (Figures provide by Virginia Marine Resources Commission)

So “Eat More Fish”..... Chesapeake Bay Blue Catfish.... in doing so you are doing a good thing for the environment!!





# Is it dinner time?



Catch it! Cook it!

Blackened Blue Catfish

For more Information contact the VMPB



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