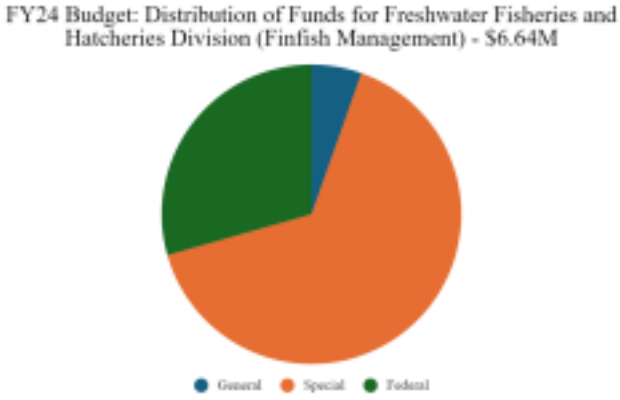
Nontidal License Fee Increase FAQs

1. **What is the purpose of the Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division?** The purpose of the Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division is to manage Maryland's freshwater resources using scientifically valid, standardized assessments and management techniques to provide high-quality, diverse, and accessible fisheries for Maryland residents and visitors. Fish and Wildlife agencies are entrusted with managing resources for the public good, thus ensuring the long-term sustainability of wildlife populations and the health of our ecosystems.
2. **Why does the fishing license fee need to be increased?** The nontidal fishing license fee has not increased since 2007 (17 years) and the trout stamp fee has not increased since 1992 (32 years) while the cost of providing fish and services has increased 56 percent and 129 percent, respectively; expenditures at current service levels exceed revenue.
3. **What does revenue from the sale of fishing licenses pay for?** Revenue generated by the sale of fishing licenses pays for critical fishery management and conservation efforts to improve fishing, maintain and operate hatcheries, stock sportfish and forage species, manage invasive fishes, improve fishing infrastructure such as fishing access points, boat ramps, and other recreational facilities, and support scientific research and data collection to ensure sustainable fisheries management practices.



4. **How is the Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division funded?** The division is funded by the sale of nontidal fishing licenses and stamps (special funds, ~ 65 percent), federal excise tax on fishing-related equipment managed through the Sportfish Restoration Program (federal funds, ~30 percent). Only five

percent of the division's budget is provided by general tax revenue (general funds,

~ 5 percent).

5. How were the proposed fees determined? The proposed fees were recommended by a workgroup that consisted of members from the department's Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission, Black Bass Advisory Committee, and the Coldwater Fishery Advisory Committee working with information provided by Fishing and Boating Services and Finance and Administrative Services. Members of these advisory bodies represent the interests of Maryland's freshwater angling constituency. The fee structure was based on the inflation rate calculated using the Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index, price benchmarking with fees of neighboring states, and current national/local average fees for comparable licenses and stamps. The fees recommended by the workgroup are below:

* The fee for nonresident anglers licenses are the greater of this amount or a fee equal to the fee charged a Maryland resident by the nonresident's home state for a similar license.

Residential Nontidal $32

Resident 7 Day Nontidal $16

Resident Trout Stamp $20

Non-Resident Nontidal* $55

Non-Resident 7 Day* $45

Non-Resident 3 Day* $35

Non-Resident Trout Stamp $30

Senior Consolidated $12 (- trout stamp)

6. What is the process for increasing fishing license fees/stamps in Maryland? Based on current and predicted revenue and expenditures provided by Finance and Administrative Services, Fishing and Boating Services updates the advisory bodies on the current budget projections, shortfalls, and the need to increase fees. This need is based on data and analysis of current funding levels, the ability to provide essential services, and future needs to meet constituent expectations. A workgroup, made up of members from the advisory bodies, recommends fees based on data provided by the department and inflation adjustments. If the recommendations are supported by the department, a bill is submitted to the Maryland General Assembly for consideration. The legislative process includes committee hearings, debates, and potential amendments. If approved by both the House of Delegates and the Senate, the bill is sent to the Governor for signature.

Throughout the process, public input and stakeholder engagement are crucial. Legislative hearings and committee meetings are open to the public. Reach out to legislators with your concerns, opinions, or suggestions on specific bills or issues. **7. How do I follow the bill and get involved?**

There are committees in both the Maryland General Assembly Senate and House of Delegates that will hear public comment and vote on this bill. The bill was

introduced into both of those committees, which is called a cross-filed bill. This means that there are two bills, one in each House of the Maryland General Assembly.

- House Bill 40 is the House of Delegates bill and will be heard by the Environment and Transportation Committee. You can follow the progress of the bill on its website: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/HB0040.
  - If you'd like to provide comments (verbal or written), there are directions you can reference here: current-ent-faqs.pdf.
- Senate Bill 258 is the Senate bill and will be heard by the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee. You can follow the process of the bill on its website: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/SB0258
  - If you'd like to provide comments (verbal or written), there are directions you can reference here: current-eee-faqs.pdf.
- If each committee passes the bill (whether they amend it or not), it would go to the full House or Senate for a vote. If it passes the full House or Senate, then it would go to the other committee above for review and that committee would hold a hearing on the bill and vote as well. So with cross-filed bills, there could be a total of four hearings (each bill would get a hearing in each legislative House). If non-identical bills pass, a joint Senate and House committee would review them to decide how the law should be worded prior to going to the Governor for signature.
- If you have any questions regarding the legislative process, you can reach out to the individual committees.
  - Education, Energy, and Environment Committee: Committees - Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
  - Environment and Transportation Committee: Committees - Environment and Transportation Committee

8. **How does the nonresident fee work?**
   Nonresidents are charged the greater of a base fee or a fee equal to the fee charged a Maryland resident by the nonresident's home state for a similar license. The base level fee for a nonresident was based on the inflation rate calculated using the Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index, price benchmarking with fees of neighboring states, and current national/local average fees for comparable licenses.
9. **What additional services will be provided by the higher fees?** Fees that simply cover the inflationary cost increase would only cover current services at the present time and would immediately begin to lag behind inflation. Additional investments in hatchery infrastructure improvements and the Invasive Fishes Program are priorities for the division.
10. **When would the fee increase go into effect?** If approved by the legislature and signed by the Governor, the fees would go into effect during the 2026 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026).

11. **Are you going to stock more trout?** The number of trout that can be reared at our existing coldwater hatcheries is dependent on the flow of the source water and the size of the fish to be stocked. The infrastructure at the coldwater hatcheries is aging and production can not be increased appreciably without significant upgrades. Investing in these upgrades and expanding and improving the trout stocking program are priorities for the division.
12. **What happens if nontidal license fees/stamps are not increased?** In Fiscal Year 2027 expenditures will exceed revenue and the remaining reserves will be depleted. To work within the existing budget, staff, services, programs, and hatcheries will need to be reduced. Cuts would need to continue annually to remain within budget as inflation continues.
13. **Why are the fees increasing so drastically?** Costs of goods and materials have increased substantially during the 17 years (nontidal license) and 32 years (trout stamp, senior consolidated license) since the current license/stamp fees were established. Just accounting for inflation to 2024 would not cover additional years of operation or allow investing in critical hatchery infrastructure and programs.
14. **How do good recreational fisheries benefit local communities and Maryland?** Freshwater fisheries can have a significant positive economic impact on local communities by providing income through commercial services (guide and outfitting services), supporting recreational fishing tourism, and generating jobs related to fishing gear, boat maintenance and related services, fuel, restaurants, and lodging, thus contributing to overall economic activity and community well-being, especially in rural areas where other employment options may be limited. Nontidal fishing in Maryland in 2015 was estimated to generate nearly 400 million dollars in economic benefits (Knoche, 2016). More information on the economic impact of freshwater sportfishing can be found in the Sportfishing in America economics report. Fishing is a recreational activity that can improve one's quality of life and foster a connection to nature.