

Public Hearing for Proposed Blue Crab Regulations

Annapolis, Maryland
February 4, 2009

Stevensville, Maryland
February 10, 2009

What is Happening Tonight?

- Maryland law requires MD DNR to have a public hearing before new crab regulations can become effective.
- Tonight, DNR is asking for oral and written comments on the proposed regulations.

Objective of the 2009 blue crab regulatory proposal -

- Maintain the target fishing removal level of 46% of the population.
- Continue to conserve female crabs in order to build the spawning population.
- Distribute the impact over the crabbing season rather than focusing regulations in September and October as was done in 2008.
- Begin addressing the large number of unused crab licenses (latent effort) that have the potential to re-enter the fishery.
- Identify who is crabbing recreationally, so we can better estimate recreational harvest, which is largely unknown.

AGENDA

Opening Remarks

Harley Speir, Fisheries Service Assistant Director

Overview of Proposed Regulations

Brenda Davis, Fisheries Service

Discussion of Proposed Freeze of LCC Licenses

Lynn Fegley, Assistant Director

Public Comment on Proposed Regulations

Facilitated by Harley Speir

Meeting Summary

Harley Speir

Adjourn

You may submit written
comment on the proposed regulation until
February 17:

- E-mail - fisheriespubliccomment@dnr.state.md.us
- Fax - 410-260-8310
- Mail – MDNR

Tawes State Office Building, B-2
580 Taylor Avenue
Annapolis, MD 21401
Attn: Blue Crab Public Comment

Ground Rules

- Individuals will be called on from the sign-in sheets.
- Only one person will speak at a time.
- Speaking time will be limited.
- Please focus comments on the regulatory proposal.
- Please be respectful.

Overview of 2009 Proposed Regulations

The Recreational Blue Crab Fishery...

2009 Proposed Regulations Recreational:

- Continue the prohibition of female crab harvest – with the exception of soft crabs.
- Clarify the definition of a collapsible crab trap to allow the use of a wider variety of traps.
- Set a maximum net ring diameter of 24 inches.
- Implement a free, but required, recreational crabbing registration.

2009 Proposed Regulations Recreational:

- Removes \$3 discount for Chesapeake Bay sport fishing license holders.
- Increases the nonresident crabbing boat license from \$15 to \$30. The resident crabbing boat license fee remains at \$15.

2009 Proposed Regulations Recreational:

- The complimentary crabbing license will no longer be included with the Bay Sport Fishing Boat Decal – individual crab licenses must be purchased separately.
- The recreational Crab Boat Decal will continue to include an individual license that allows the license holder to crab anywhere, not just on the boat.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How many crabs can I keep if I am licensed?

Up to 1 bushel of hard crabs and 2 dozen soft crabs or peelers. (Max of 2 bushels on board a vessel with 2 or more licensed crabbers)

2. How many crabs can I keep if I register to crab?

Up to 2 dozen hard crabs and 1 dozen soft crabs or peelers from shore.

Up to 4 dozen hard crabs and 1 dozen soft crabs or peelers (regardless of the number of registered people on board) from a vessel.

3. How many crabs can I keep if I am exempt from having to register to crab?

Up to 2 dozen hard crabs and 1 dozen soft crabs or peelers from shore.

Up to 4 dozen hard crabs and 1 dozen soft crabs or peelers (regardless of the number of registered people on board) from a vessel.

Frequently Asked Questions

4. I have a Chesapeake Bay Sport Fishing boat decal. Will I have to get a crabbing license or register to crab?

Yes. The Chesapeake Bay Sport Fishing boat decal currently comes with a complimentary crabbing license. Under the proposed regulations, it would no longer come with this crabbing license. So in order to crab from your boat, you will need to either register (to keep up to 4 dozen from a boat) or purchase a crabbing license (to keep up to 1 bushel or up to 2 bushels if another licensed individual is on board).

5. I have a crabbing boat decal. Do I need to purchase another license to crab from shore?

No. The crabbing boat decal paperwork can be used by an individual licensee from shore for the person who purchased it.

Frequently Asked Questions

6. I have a commercial crabbing license. Do I need to buy a recreational license or register to crab recreationally?

No. Commercial crabbers may still trotline recreationally as long as the crabber is following all recreational rules. A frozen LCC license is not valid.

7. I have a recreational crab license and my wife has a registration. How many crabs can we take on board our vessel?

You are licensed to use a trotline and may keep up to 1 bushel hard crabs. Your wife is not licensed to use a trotline and may only keep up to 4 dozen hard crabs and 1 dozen soft crabs from a vessel. Therefore, if you are using a trotline you may only possess up to 1 bushel. If you are using crab traps or net rings you may possess 1 bushel + 4 dozen hard crabs.

Frequently Asked Questions

8. I have an individual crabbing license and my 12 year old son comes out on my boat with me. How many crabs can we catch?

The 12 year old is exempt from the registration, but his catch limit is the same as if he was a registered crabber. Therefore, the answer is the same as that provided in #7.

9. I own waterfront property and I have guests coming over to crab from my pier. Do we need to register?

Yes, you and your guests need to register and each registered person may keep up to 2 dozen hard crabs and 1 dozen soft crabs or peelers.

The Commercial Fishery...

The 2008 regulatory strategy commercial fishery -

- Beginning September 1, 2008 crabbers were placed on daily bushel limits that were calculated based on their 2004-2007 harvest history.
- Crabbers with no history of harvesting females during September and October of 2004-2007 were not permitted to harvest females in September and October of 2008.
- The crabbing season was closed to female harvest on October 23, 2008

Process for the Development of 2009 blue crab regulatory proposal

- Beginning in September 2008, the Department held several meeting with industry members to develop regulation.
- Three meetings were held – one per month in September, October and November.

2009 Proposed Regulations Commercial:

- The harvest of mature female crabs will be controlled by seasonal closures and daily bushel limits.
- Bushel limits are assigned by license category.
- Not more than 2 bushel limits are allowed per boat – this will act to limit impact of unused commercial crabbing licenses by preventing crabbers from ‘stacking’ licenses on a vessel.
- The season will close on November 10 to the harvest of female crabs.

Proposed 2009 commercial bushel limits and closures.
Limits are daily, per boat and apply to mature female crabs.

Closures:				
Season closed to sook harvest	November 10 – last day			
Period closed to sook harvest	June 1 – June 15 inclusive			
Period closed to sook harvest	Sept 26 - Oct. 4 inclusive			
Bushel Limits:	LCC,	TFL/CB3,	TFL/CB6,	TFL/CB9
April 1 - May 31	2	10	15	20
June 16 - August 31	2	6	10	15
Sept 1 - Nov 10 (except Sept closure)	10	25	35	45

The Bushel limits are not defined in regulation. Both bushel limits and closure periods can be altered by the Department via public notice. This will provide the flexibility to allow harvest to shrink or expand with crab abundance estimated from the winter dredge survey.

Latent Effort

Reducing unused commercial licenses (latent effort)

- DNR is proposing to freeze LCC (limited crab catcher) licenses that have not reported harvest (even one day) between 2004 and 2008.

Proposed Exemptions From the LCC Freeze

- LCC was attained through DNR apprenticeship program.
- LCC was attained through permanent, family or beneficiary transfer between August 1, 2006 and December 12, 2008.
- License holder can document active military service between January 1, 2004 and December 15, 2008.
- License holder was granted a hardship appeal for the 2008 female bushel limits.
- License holder currently resides and has resided for at least 5 years on an island in the State that is at least 3 miles from the mainland.

Additional Information on the Proposed Freeze of LCC Licenses...

Timeline and Process for Proposed LCC Freeze

- DNR will notifying all LCC license holders of their status prior to the close of the public comment period on February 17.
- If you have specific questions about your LCC status, please call 410-260-8286. Your call and question will be logged and your call will be returned in the order in which it was received.

FAQ's on Proposed LCC Freeze

- **How does freezing an unused license help crabs?**
 - Currently, there are approximately 6000 licensed commercial crabbers in Maryland. In any given year, only a small portion are active. The crab fishery cannot currently support an increase in crabbing effort. Regulations assume latent effort remains latent.
- **If my license is frozen, can I crab in 2009?**
 - Yes, you will be able to crab until the license expires during the 2009 season. You will not be able to renew.
- **Will harvesting in 2009 prevent my license from being frozen?**
 - No, if you received notification that your license is frozen, reporting harvest in the first part of the 2009 crabbing season will not change your status.

FAQ's on Proposed LCC Freeze

- **How long will my license be frozen?**
 - The freeze will remain until the abundance of spawning crabs reaches the target level, and remains there for 3 years. At that point, the Department will issue a process for re-entry to the fishery.
- **If I have other fishing authorizations (OYH, FIN etc), will they be impacted if my LCC is frozen?**
 - No.
- **Is it constitutional to freeze a commercial fishing authorization?**
 - Yes, this proposed regulation has been researched and reviewed the Maryland Attorney General's office.

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