



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Horseshoe Crab Board Sets Male-Only Bait Harvest Specifications for Horseshoe Crabs of Delaware Bay-Origin for 2026 and 2027

Dewey Beach, DE – The Commission’s Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved bait harvest specifications for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay-origin. Taking into consideration the output of the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework, the Board set an annual harvest limit of 500,000 male horseshoe crabs and zero female Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crabs for 2026 and 2027. Addendum IX was approved in May 2025 and allows the Board to set multi-year specifications for male-only harvest.

While the ARM Framework output allowed for a small amount of female harvest, the Board elected to maintain zero female horseshoe crab harvest for the next two fishing years as a conservative measure while it conducts a stakeholder engagement process to evaluate several aspects of the ARM Framework and considers changes to better align the model with stakeholder values. To make up for the lost harvest of larger female crabs, the Board agreed to increase Maryland and Virginia’s male harvest quotas with an offset ratio of 2:1 males to females. Using the allocation methodology established in Addendum VIII, the following quotas were set for New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia:

	Delaware Bay Origin Horseshoe Crab Quota (no. of crabs)	Total Quota*
State	Male Only	Male Only
Delaware	173,014	173,014
New Jersey	173,014	173,014
Maryland	132,865	255,980
Virginia**	21,107	81,331

*Total harvest quotas for Maryland and Virginia include crabs which are not of Delaware Bay origin.

**Virginia harvest refers to harvest east of the COLREGS line only

Under Addendum IX, the Board can maintain the harvest limit of 500,000 male horseshoe crabs through 2028 based on the 2025 ARM Framework output with no annual action required. The Board will continue to review survey data for red knots and horseshoe crabs each year and can modify the specifications before 2028 if desired.

The Board also reviewed and approved changes to the Advisory Panel membership based on recommendations from the Board Work Group tasked with providing input on the appropriate distribution of advisors by region and user group, including non-traditional stakeholders. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species.