



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## NEWS RELEASE

*Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

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### Horseshoe Crab Board Sets 2024 Specifications for Delaware Bay-Origin Horseshoe Crabs

Beaufort, NC – The Commission’s Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved harvest specifications for Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crabs. Taking into consideration the output of the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework Revision, the Board set a harvest limit of 500,000 male and zero female Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crabs for the 2024 season.

“The Board stands behind the ARM Framework Revision as the best available tool to set harvest limits for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay-origin. As a result of its use, the Delaware Bay horseshoe crab population has been increasing, with abundance of both female and male horseshoe crabs in the Delaware region at an all-time high since 2003. Despite this positive finding, the Board elected to implement zero female horseshoe crab harvest for the 2024 season as a conservative measure, considering continued public concern about the status of the red knot population in the Delaware Bay,” stated Board Chair John Clark of Delaware.

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

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

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

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.

As part of its ongoing discussions regarding how best to manage Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crabs and in response to the Stakeholder Survey, the Board will move forward with a Horseshoe Crab Management Objectives Workshop. The Workshop will include a small group of managers, scientists, and stakeholders to explore different management objectives for the Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crab, with a focus on multi-year specification setting and modeling approaches when selecting no female harvest. The intent would be to provide a report to the Board in time for the 2025 specification setting process next fall.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at [cstarks@asmfc.org](mailto:cstarks@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

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