



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## NEWS RELEASE

*Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

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### ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Board Sets 2017 Specifications for Horseshoe Crabs of Delaware Bay Origin

Bar Harbor, ME – The Commission’s Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved the harvest specifications for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay origin. Under the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework, the Board set a harvest limit of 500,000 Delaware Bay male horseshoe crabs and zero female horseshoe crabs for the 2017 season. Based on the allocation mechanism established in Addendum VII, the following quotas were set for the states of New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, which harvest horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay origin:

	Delaware Bay Origin Horseshoe Crab Quota (no. of crabs)	Total Quota**
State	Male Only	Male Only
Delaware	162,136	162,136
New Jersey	162,136	162,136
Maryland	141,112	255,980
Virginia*	34,615	81,331

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

\*\* Total male harvest includes crabs which are not of Delaware Bay origin.

The Board chose a harvest package based on the Technical Committee and ARM Subcommittee recommendation. The ARM Framework, established through Addendum VII, incorporates both shorebird and horseshoe crab abundance levels to set optimized harvest levels for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay origin. Previously, the horseshoe crab abundance estimate was based on data from the Benthic Trawl Survey conducted by Virginia Polytechnic Institute. However, due to a lack of funding, the Benthic Trawl Survey has not been conducted in recent years. Therefore, a composite index of the Delaware Trawl Survey, New Jersey Delaware Bay Trawl Survey, and New Jersey Ocean Trawl Survey was used instead. The Benthic Trawl Survey has been funded for 2016 and is currently underway. Funding for future years is being explored.

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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 anadromous species.

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Given the upcoming benchmark stock assessment in 2018 and the potential for management changes resulting from the assessment, the Board postponed any further action of Draft Addendum VIII until after the assessment and peer review. In preparation for the assessment, the Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee, Delaware Bay Ecosystem Technical Committee, and the ARM Subcommittee emphasized the need for information on sex-specific mortality of horseshoe crabs from the time of collection to release by biomedical bleeding facilities. Further, the committees recommended the states conduct surveys of eel and whelk fishermen to gain information on current baiting practices for these fisheries. The states agreed to work on both issues with its biomedical industries and fishermen. Results of these surveys are expected to be made available to the Board in May 2017.

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