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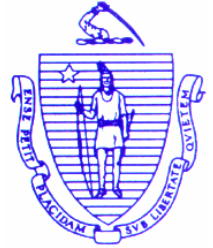
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Marine Fisheries Advisory

ANNUAL NOTICE REGARDING HORSESHOE CRAB RULES

This letter serves as an annual notice to all horseshoe crab harvesters about the rules and regulations for the upcoming harvest season. Regulations have not changed since last year.

The 2011 no-fishing dates shall be May 1-5, May 15-19, May 30-June 3, and June 13-17. Closures begin at 12:01 am on the first day of the closure and end at 11:59 pm on the fifth day of the closure. The prohibition on weekend (Saturdays or Sundays) harvest is no longer in effect.

Permits:

Marine Fisheries requires any person who harvests more than six (6) horseshoe crabs (*Limulus polyphemus*) per day for any purpose to have a regulated fishery permit. The moratorium on new permits remains in effect and no new permits will be issued in 2011.

There are two types of horseshoe crab harvest permits - the *biomedical permit* and the *bait permit*. You can not have both permits at the same time.

- Biomedical harvest permit:
 - Allows the harvest of crabs for biomedical use only;
 - Biomedical harvester must sell the crabs directly to the biomedical company, Associates of Cape Cod, or to a biomedical-only dealer;
 - All crabs harvested under the provisions of a biomedical permit must be returned to the water at the original harvest location;
 - Crabs harvested under a biomedical permit cannot be sold to any bait dealer including those bait dealers supplying horseshoe crabs to the biomedical company for bleeding;
 - Horseshoe crabs supplied by bait dealers to the biomedical company are used for bait after bleeding by the biomedical company, not returned to the water.
- Bait permit:
 - Take only crabs for bait to be used by the permit holder or to sell to a bait dealer;
 - Does not authorize the sale of horseshoe crabs to other fishermen unless the harvester has a bait dealer permit;
 - The bait dealer may sell the crabs for bait, to another dealer, or to the biomedical company.

Catch Limits:

- Minimum commercial size:

- Proosomal width must be 7 inches or greater.
- Trip limits:
 - Beach Harvest –
 - 400 crabs per 24 hour period (defined as from noon until noon the following day);
 - Hand-gear harvest only;
 - This is a per vessel limit, no matter how many permit holders are with the vessel.
 - Dragger Harvest –
 - Trawlers may possess no more than 400 crabs per 24 hour period until July 1;
 - Trawlers may possess no more than 600 crabs per 24 hour period after July 1.
- Area Closures:
 - The Pleasant Bay Complex-
 - Closed to all bait harvest;
 - Includes the waters of Pleasant Bay, Little Pleasant Bay, Chatham Harbor (North), Pochet Creek, Round Cove, Bassing Harbor, Ryders Cove, Crows Pond, Frostfish Creek, Muddy Creek, Quanset Pond, Namequoit River, Meetinghouse Pond, Kescayogansett Pond and Paw Wah Pond.
 - Monomoy Island Refuge and the Cape Cod National Seashore-
 - Closed to crab harvest;
 - If you are unsure of the boundaries of the federal closures, check with the Refuge or Seashore offices.

Trip Level Reporting:

All fishermen are required to participate in the trip-level reporting program. Trip-level reporting began on January 1, 2010. If you have any questions about reporting please contact the Statistics Program at our Gloucester office (978-282-0308 ext. 101).

- Reporting overview:
 - Reporting-
 - All MA permit holders must submit monthly catch reports whether you fished or not;
 - All catch must be reported whether it was sold or consumed personally;
 - Reports are due by the 15th of the following month;
 - Online applications are available for those who wish to report electronically;
 - Paper submissions will be accepted by mail or fax.
 - Exceptions-
 - Those who report already to NMFS through Vessel Trip Report or Highly Migratory Species programs.
- Horseshoe crab specific reporting:
 - 2011 data entry forms (both paper and online) do not specifically provide a column for the beach or bay where harvest occurred. Please ensure the applicable Shellfish Growing Area code is entered on the form in the column “MNG Area;”
 - To ascertain pertinent beach harvest information *Marine Fisheries* may conduct follow-up surveys with harvesters;
 - Fishermen may fill out the traditional reporting form and mail it to the Horseshoe Crab biologist in the New Bedford office.
 - Species Code:
 - Male: HSCM;
 - Female: HSCF;
 - Use a different row to report daily harvest for each gender.
 - Gear Code:
 - Hand Harvest: 0760

As a reminder, if you do not file your monthly catch reports and/or file them on time, *Marine Fisheries* may refuse to renew your permit for the following year.

Questions and comments should be directed to Vin Malkoski in our New Bedford Office [508-910-6318] or vincent.malkoski@state.ma.us.