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Blue Crabs – Chesapeake Bay & Its Tidal Tributaries

Season

April 1 through December 15.

Time of Day Restrictions

Rivers, creeks and tributaries:

- April and October through Dec. 15—one half hour after sunrise to sunset.
- May through September—one half hour before sunrise to sunset.

Chesapeake Bay Mainstem:

- April and October through Dec. 15—one half hour after sunrise to 5:00 p.m.
- May through September—one half hour before sunrise to 5:00 p.m.
- It is illegal to set or fish crabbing gear prior to or after the time restrictions.
- Using properly registered crab pots on private property, dip nets or handlines is permitted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Day of Week

No recreational crabbing is allowed on Wednesdays except:

- When using crab pots from private property;
- When using handlines or dip nets;
- During a week when a state or federal holiday falls on a Wednesday or Thursday.

Minimum Size Limits

(measured from tip to tip of spikes)

Male hard crab:

- April 1 to July 14—5 inches
- July 15 to December 15—5¼ inches

Male peeler crab:

- April 1 to July 14—3¼ inches
- July 15 to December 15—3½ inches

Soft crab:


- April 1 to December 15—3½ inches

It is Illegal for a Recreational Crabber:

- To sell crabs.
- To possess an egg-bearing (sponge) crab or any female hard or peeler crab.
- To set or fish a trotline, collapsible trap or crab net ring within 100 feet of another individual's set gear.
- To fish crab gear which belongs to another person.
- To harvest crabs while SCUBA diving.

Additional Crab Pot Rules

- Crab pots must have 2 cull rings, one measuring at least $2\frac{3}{16}$ inches and one at least $2\frac{5}{16}$ inches located in the exterior side panel or the top panels of the pot.
- Crab pots must have a turtle excluder device attached to each entrance or funnel in the lower chamber constructed of wire or plastic, rectangular in shape not larger than $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches high by $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches long



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The Amount of Gear Allowed for Unlicensed and Licensed Recreational Crabbing

License Status	Handlines and Dip Nets	Crab Pots on Private Property	Trotline	Collapsible Traps and Net Rings	Seine	Eel Pots
Unlicensed	Unlimited	A maximum of 2 registered crab pots per property regardless of the number of owners or lessees. These pots must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marked with your DNRid Set in front of private property within 100 yards of shore Attached by a line to the property or marked by a buoy or pole and sign 	Not Allowed	Not Allowed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 30 traps, rings or combination of both* Must be marked with a buoy bearing your DNRid unless attached to a pier, wharf or boat Traps must have a flat bottom measuring no more than 20 inches by 15 inches and have no more than four articulated sides Net rings must have a diameter less than or equal to 30 inches 	Not Allowed	Not Allowed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 10 eel pots for catching your own bait Must be labeled with your DNRid and may not be set in a buoy-free channel
Licensed	Unlimited		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 1200ft* Must have floats of the same color, size, shape on each end Floats must be marked with your DNRid 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mesh cannot be greater than 1/4" Cannot exceed 50' in width and 5' in height Must be emptied from shore 	

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*The amount of gear is per boat regardless of the number of licensees or individuals on board

Daily Creel/Possession Limits

license		Daily Creel / Possession Limit	
		Male Hard Crabs	Male Peelers, Soft crabs or combination
Unlicensed Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From shore From unlicensed boat From waterfront crab pots 	2 dozen	1 dozen
Licensed Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From shore From unlicensed boat From waterfront crab pots 	1 bushel	2 dozen
Boat Limits			
Unlicensed BOAT	With 2 or more unlicensed	4 dozen	1 dozen
	With 1 licensee and any number of unlicensed individuals	1 bushel	2 dozen
	With 2 or more licensees and any number of unlicensed individuals	2 bushels	2 dozen
Licensed BOAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With 1 or more unlicensed With 1 licensee With owner and any number of unlicensed individuals 	1 bushel	2 dozen
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With 2 or more licensees with any number of unlicensed individuals With a licensee who is not the owner and any number of unlicensed individuals 	2 bushels	2 dozen



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