

RECREATIONAL CRAB POT

This summary provides introductory information to recreational fishermen who fish for crabs, but does not attempt to fully explain all aspects of the applicable regulations and laws. This summary is provided for the convenience of the reader. The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) caution that the exact language of the statutes and regulations is the best guide to their meaning.

Accordingly, while DNREC intends the following summary to be useful as a way of quickly introducing key concepts, each person involved with recreationally fishing for crabs should rely on the actual language of the provisions for ultimate guidance. All persons have a paramount responsibility to comply with the Delaware law as found in the Delaware Code and the DNREC's regulations. Compliance with this summary will not be a defense to a violation of state law.

Laws in Title 7, Chapters 19 and 23 of the Delaware Code and Shellfish Regulations pertaining to fishing for blue crabs are available from the Fisheries Section, Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), 89 Kings Highway, Dover, Delaware 19901. (302) 739-3441.

LEGAL GEAR

Any person may use the following gear to take blue crabs in Delaware without a license or permit.

1. no more than two crab pots* ;
2. crab traps** (no limit on the number or size);
3. trot line (no length limit)
4. dip net
5. seine net (no more than 300 feet in length)
6. hand line(s) (no limit on the number)

*A crab pot is a wire frame covered by a webbing of wire or netting through which a conical shaped funnel allows crabs to enter as they are attracted to bait. It does not require attendance to catch crabs. Each crab pot must be attached to an all white buoy that has inscribed the owners full name and permanent mailing address either on the buoy or on a waterproof tag attached to the buoy.

** A crab trap is a wire frame covered with a webbing of wire or netting that is activated to enclose crabs when they are attracted to bait placed in the trap. It requires attendance to catch crabs.

LIMIT

Any person who does not have a commercial crab license shall not take more than one bushel of blue crabs per day.

AREA

Recreational crabbing is permitted in any of the waters of this state.

MIMINUM SIZE : Crabs are measured tip to tip on the dorsal shell. Adult male hard crabs (Jimmy) must be no less than five (5) inches. Adult female hard crabs (sook), that have a V shaped apron on the bottom must be no less than five(5) inches. The apron is the abdomen of the crab which is the rear portion of the crab folded underneath the body. Adult female hard crabs, that have a U shaped or rounded apron have already spawned (she-crab) and chances are small she will spawn again. There is no minimum size limit on adult female crabs with a U shaped or round apron. Peeler crabs must be no less than 3 inches. A peeler crab is a crab about to molt and shed its hard shell. Soft crabs must be 3-1/2 inches. Soft crabs remain soft for less than 24 hours before their shell hardens.

SEASONS

Crabs may be taken at any time except by crab pots during the period December 1 through the last day of February.

A RECREATIONAL CRABBER SHALL NOT DO THE FOLLOWNG :

- Tend to or place in the water more that two (2) crab pots.
- Tend to or lift any other persons crab pot unless said other person is present.
- Take or attempt to take more than one (1) bushel of crabs a day.
- Set any crab pots between December 1 and the last day in February, next ensuing.
- Sell, trade, barter or attempt to sell, trade or barter any crabs.
- Fail to attend and remove crabs from a crab pot at least once every 72 hours.
- Take or possess any female crab bearing eggs (sponge crab) or any female crab from which the eggs have been removed.
- Use any dredge or trawl net to take crabs.
- Set any crab pot, trap or trot line in a designated channel.