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**Maryland Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee Operating  
Guidelines  
Updated June 1, 2022**

**Background:**

The Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee has been convened to serve as an advisory body to the Department on matters concerning the blue crab commercial fishing industry. Specifically, the Department is seeking coordinated industry input on the structure of daily bushel limits and closures for mature female hard crabs. Daily catch limits and closed periods were established in 2009 as a means to restrict female harvest and to ensure that annual, bay wide female blue crab harvest does not exceed the current female harvest target of 28% of the population. The number of crabs in the population is estimated each year by the Bay wide winter dredge survey. The daily bushel limits and the closed periods can be altered by public notice. This gives the Department the ability to quickly adjust catch limits and closed periods each year based on the number of crabs estimated to be in the Bay. This adaptive management is designed to keep harvest at the target level and in balance with the population. The Department will provide the Advisory Committee with a series of options for various levels of crab abundance, and the Committee will determine which option best suits industry's needs.

In addition to advising the Department on the current management framework (bushel limits and closed periods), the Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee will have the opportunity to request additional meetings to discuss other issues of concern to the fishery and to discuss options for future management strategies for the fishery. All advice offered to the Department via the Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee will be vetted through the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission, and the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission may also task the Committee to discuss other issues or topics related to the blue crab fishery. Should the Department choose to move forward with advice involving regulation, the Department will adhere to the established public process for initiating regulatory change. This includes public scoping of the regulatory idea, obtaining input from both the Tidal and Sport Fisheries Advisory Commissions, and a public comment opportunity during the regulatory process.

**Membership:**

The membership of the Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee is representative of the diverse regions and interests within the commercial crab fishery. The membership represents six regions of the Maryland portion of Chesapeake Bay: 1) Northern Bay – *Harford and Cecil counties*, 2) Middle Western Shore – *Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties*, 3) Lower Western Shore – *Calvert, St. Mary's and Charles counties*, 4) Middle Eastern Shore – *Queen Anne and Kent counties*, 5) Lower Eastern Shore – *Talbot and Dorchester counties*, and 6) Tangier Sound/Smith Island – *Somerset and Wicomico counties*. Each of these regions has one member assigned to each of three seats: Hard Pot, Trotline and At Large. There is a fourth seat for a peeler potter added to the Tangier/Smith Island region. In addition, the president of the Maryland Watermen's Association, the president of the Chesapeake Bay Commercial Fishermen's Association, the Chair of the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission, an industry processor (with input from CBSIA) and an industry retailer are included

as members by virtue of their roles as Industry leaders. Nominations for each seat are provided to the Department by the county/region representatives and the industry leaders respectively.

The Natural Resources violation history of each nominee is reviewed by the Department. Any current member of the Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee who accumulates 10 or more points during any two year period will be removed from the Committee. In selecting new or replacement committee members, an individual who has acquired 10 or more points within the most recent two years will not be eligible. The Department may also take into account other factors when determining eligibility, which include, but are not limited to excessive reporting violations, revocation of fishing permits, and probation before judgment dispositions for tier II or III offenses. Eligible nominees are appointed to the committee by the Director of Fishing and Boating Services.

**Each member has the following responsibilities:**

**Prepare for meetings:** Read distributed information prior to meetings; discuss issues with the people you represent; and prepare to communicate the viewpoints and concerns of those you represent.

**Service Between Meetings:** Maintain regular communication with the people you represent, informing them of progress and work of the Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee.

**Work in Meetings:** Attend to process; follow agenda; suggest solutions or compromises; search for closure.

**Participate:** Use the capacities and resources you possess; promote the ideas, perspectives and constituencies you represent while adhering to the purpose of the Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee.

**Term of Tenure and Selection of Future Members:**

Consistent with the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission, members are appointed to four year terms. The Department will request that county/region representatives and industry leadership conduct a comprehensive review of the membership every four years or as needed. An individual may serve more than one term.

**Support Staff**

The Maryland DNR Fisheries Service shall designate a staff person(s) to support the Maryland Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee.

The assigned staff person(s) shall have the following roles:

Administrator - Prepare and distribute meeting agendas, meeting summaries and meeting support information; arrange for meeting space; and secure materials and/or resources to facilitate meetings

Meeting Facilitator - Ensure adherence to agenda and operating guidelines; facilitate and clarify discussion; involve membership; explore diversity of opinions/inputs; resolve discussions; facilitate public participation in a fair and equitable manner while maintaining an atmosphere of civility and respect; allocate meeting time to accommodate discussion

Technical Support: Provide information and consultation regarding technical issues.

**Attendance**

- Proxy Attendees. A single, designated proxy from the same regional area as the member, may be nominated to serve on behalf of a Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee Member.
- In the event that you are unable to attend a meeting, you must notify the DNR staff person assigned to the Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee within 48 hours of the meeting. The DNR staff person will work with you to obtain and provide your input to the Committee. The DNR staff person will notify Committee members if a meeting is to be canceled for lack of a quorum.
- If a Member or their proxy is unable to attend two consecutive meetings of the Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee, the Department will ask the other county/region representatives and/or industry leaders, as appropriate, to review this person's membership and potentially nominate a replacement.

- **Virtual Meeting Attendance:** All Committee members will be required to identify themselves during virtual meetings. Additionally, members of the public who attend virtual meetings and wish to provide public comment will be asked to identify themselves and provide information regarding their affiliations.

## **Quorum**

A quorum is a simple majority of appointed Members.

## **Communication and Decision-Making Ground Rules**

The Maryland Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee is asked to consider each suggested ground rule in an effort to facilitate group discussions:

- 1) Only Committee Members (or approved proxy attendees) will sit at the meeting table.
- 2) Only one member will speak at a time, each member will have equal opportunity to participate.
- 4) Each Member will focus on the agenda issue to keep the discussion moving forward.
- 5) Each Member will respect all other Members and individuals of the public that may be in attendance at meetings.
- 6) Each Member will strive to listen actively and be open-minded.
- 7) Public observers will be allowed to address the Committee at a designated time period on the agenda for each meeting.

For topics that are not on the agenda, DNR staff will use a public sign-up list in deciding how to allocate the available time on the agenda to the number of people who want to speak.

- 8) **Motions.** Committee members may make a motion.

If a motion is made, it shall be written down and reviewed for accuracy. Before discussing the motion, there needs to be a second to the motion. If the motion receives a second, DNR staff will facilitate a fair and equitable discussion among the Committee members, and an opportunity for public comment as time allows.

- 9) Discussion shall be limited to the merits of the immediately pending question or issue.
- 10) A seconded motion shall be approved by a 2/3 majority of the Committee members in order to be adopted. Motions may be voted upon using ballots rather than a show of hands.
- 11) In the event that the Committee cannot, by 2/3 majority, approve a motion on a recommended management action concerning daily bushel limits for female hard crabs, or for closed periods for hard crabs, the Department will forward a decision to the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission. If the motion is approved, but not carried unanimously, the Department requests that the Committee inform the Department on the reason for the descending vote(s). This is needed as the Department is the decision-making body, and not only needs to hear the reasons for supporting the motion but also those that oppose the motion.