

**POSSIBLE CHANGES TO REGULATIONS
BLUE CRAB – Clarifications**

What is being considered?	Why is this necessary?	Who will this affect?
Clarify that the chapter applies to blue crabs.	The crab chapter does not specify the species of crabs to which the regulations apply. This change will ensure that rules meant specifically for blue crabs do not apply to individuals who harvest other species of crab, like Cancer crabs.	Recreational and commercial crabbers.
Define what is meant by “bait line” in COMAR 08.02.03.03B.	The bait line is the portion of the trotline measured from the first bait to the last bait. Clarifying this will ensure understanding and proper compliance with length requirements for trotlines.	Recreational and commercial crabbers.
Clarify the buoy requirement in COMAR 08.02.03.03E.	Currently the regulation only specifies two dimensions, when in fact the buoy should have a third dimension so it can be easily seen on the water.	Recreational and commercial crabbers.
Clarify and condense rules for Worcester County.	The goal is to put all of the regulations that are specific to Worcester County in the same place. Crabbers harvesting in Worcester County can focus on that section rather than combing through the entire chapter for those regulations that apply to them.	Recreational and commercial crabbers.
Clarify the number of crabs a harvester may keep from finfish gear in COMAR 08.02.03.13.	Right now it is not explicitly clear that commercial harvesters using finfish gear can keep their limit of female crabs. This proposal would clarify the regulation to say that a harvester may keep up to two bushels of male crabs as well as their limit of female crabs.	Commercial watermen crabbing from finfish gear.
Update the public notice language to be consistent with other species managed by a fishery management plan. This will include publishing the notice on the department's website, notification at least 48 hours in advance, and dissemination of the notice in other manners (text, social media, email, hotline, and the Maryland Register).	The department has a specific format for how public notices are issued when rules are established or changed to implement a fishery management plan. The format for public notices issued to implement the Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan has not been updated for blue crabs. This change will make blue crabs consistent with other species.	Recreational crabbers, commercial crabbers, processors, and dealers.

When will this be effective?

The department expects these changes to be effective June 2020, but the exact date cannot be determined. The department will follow our normal scoping and proposal procedures.

This idea is in the scoping process (October 25—November 10). During the scoping process, the Department gathers suggestions and ideas from stakeholders and others about how to solve a fishery problem or address a need. The goal of scoping is to identify issues, potential impacts, and reasonable alternatives associated with the issues so that management actions can be developed. After the public has had an opportunity to comment on possible management actions during the scoping process, the department considers these comments and develops an appropriate management strategy.

If the action is necessary and appropriate, the rules will be promulgated following the Administrative Procedures Act described in Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the State Government Article Annotated Code of Maryland.

- The General Assembly's Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review Committee reviews the regulatory proposal for fiscal and legal analysis.
- The proposal is printed by the Division of State Documents in the Maryland Register.
- A 30 day public comment period begins on the day of publication.
- After review of the comments, the Department may adopt the changes.
- If the department adopts the changes, they become effective after a notice is published in the Maryland Register that announces approval and the effective date.

Has this change been discussed with advisory commissions?

Yes. The change was scoped at the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission meeting on October 22, 2019 and at the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission meeting on October 24, 2019.