

PUBLIC NOTICE
The Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Fishing and Boating Services
Commercial Mature Female Hard Crab Catch Limits — April through June 2024

WHAT THIS NOTICE DOES

The Secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with blue crab advisory groups, announces the commercial mature female hard crab catch limits for the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries for April through June 2024. Effective 12:01 a.m. April 1, 2024, the catch limits are:

Daily Mature Female Hard Crab Catch Limits by License Type					
Date	Container	LCC	TFL or CB3	TFL with CB6 or CB3 with CB6	TFL with CB9 or CB3 with CB9
April 1 - May 31, 2024	Bushel	2	6	9	13
	Lug	1	4	6	8
	Barrel	N/A	2	3	5
June 1 - 30, 2024	Bushel	2	9	13	16
	Lug	1	6	8	10
	Barrel	N/A	3	5	6

The above acronyms stand for: LCC – Limited Crab Harvester License 50 pots; CB3 – Crab Harvester License 300 pots; CB6 – 600 pot authorization; CB9 – 900 pot authorization; and TFL – Unlimited Tidal Fish License.

A lug is defined as a rectangular container that does not exceed the following inside dimensions: 22-⁷/₈ inches length across the top; 14-⁷/₈ inches width across the top; 21 inches length across the bottom; 13 inches width across the bottom; and 12-³/₈ inches height.

A barrel is defined as a circular container that does not exceed the following inside dimensions: 20-¹/₂ inches diameter across the top; 18 inches diameter across the bottom; and 27-¹/₂ inches height. The 2-bushel limit for LCC license holders invalidates a barrel for use because a barrel holds a minimum of 2.5 bushels of crabs.

Catch must be kept either entirely in bushels, entirely in lugs, or entirely in barrels. Containers may not be mixed on a vessel.

Commercial crabbers utilizing lugs or barrels should report harvest in pounds when completing Commercial Harvest Reports.

Mature female hard crab catch limits are based on results of the Blue Crab Winter Dredge Survey, conducted by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and in consultation with advisory groups and stakeholders.

Crew limits as described in Annotated Code of Maryland, Natural Resources Article, §4-814, are in effect. If crew members are not on board, then the licensee is restricted to the TFL or CB3 catch limits.

WHERE THIS NOTICE APPLIES

This applies to the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries, including the Maryland tributaries of the Potomac River.

WHY THIS IS NECESSARY

This action is necessary to ensure female blue crab harvest does not exceed the Chesapeake Bay exploitation fraction threshold established in Amendment 2 to the Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan.

WHO THIS NOTICE AFFECTS

This applies to commercial crabbers who harvest female blue crabs in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries.

AUTHORITY

Code of Maryland Regulations 08.02.03.14G

Josh Kurtz
Secretary of Natural Resources