



## **RECREATIONAL CRAB POT**

This summary provides introductory information on recreational crab pot fishing, 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) cautions 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 non-commercial crab potting should rely on the actual language of the provisions for ultimate guidance. All persons have a paramount responsibility to comply with Delaware law as found in the Delaware Code and the Administrative Code, Title 7 for DNREC. 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 can be obtained from the Fisheries Section, Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), 89 Kings Highway, Dover, Delaware 19901, (302) 739-9914 or via the internet. To access, go to [www.fw.delaware.gov](http://www.fw.delaware.gov), under "Information" click on "DE Code-State Laws (Conservation)" or "DE Admin Code-DNREC Regs", for fishing laws or regulations respectively.

Anyone 16 through 64 years of age who fishes for blue crabs for non-commercial purposes must be in possession of a valid general fishing license and must obtain a F.I.N. (Fisherman Information Network) number by calling 1-800-432-9228, or on-line at [www.delaware-fin.com](http://www.delaware-fin.com), or for live-operator assistance call 1-866-447-4626. Delaware residents 65 years and older are exempt from obtaining a general fishing license but must carry proof of age and residency with them when they go crabbing. All residents & non-residents age 16 and older must obtain a free F.I.N. number on an annual basis before fishing/crabbing/clamming in Delaware waters.

### **LEGAL GEAR**

Any person may use the following gear to take blue crabs in Delaware:

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 owner's full name and permanent mailing address either on the buoy or on a waterproof tag attached to the buoy.

\*A turtle by-catch device is required to be attached in each funnel entrance of a recreational crab pot to reduce the possibility of diamondback terrapins entering and drowning. A by-catch reduction device is a rigid rectangular frame of plastic or metal that measures 1.75 inches x 4.74 inches and is available at local tackle shops or can be hand-made from heavy wire or other suitable material.

\*\*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 pot license shall not take more than one bushel of blue crabs per day.

### **AREA**

Recreational crabbing is permitted in any waters of the state of Delaware unless otherwise posted by the DNREC.

### **MINIMUM 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 3½ 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 FOLLOWING**

- Tend to or place in the water more than two (2) crab pots
- Tend to or lift any other person's crab pot
- 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