



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July XX, 2012

New Report Highlights Ways to Keep Blue Crab Population Healthy

The Chesapeake Bay blue crab fishery is currently operating sustainably, according to the recently released 2012 Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Advisory Report. While the report highlights the health of the blue crab population, it also recommends continued work to sustain robust crab populations over the long term.

The report was developed by the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee, which includes scientists and representatives from federal and state governments as well as academic institutions. It is based on data collected in the 2011-12 Bay-wide winter dredge survey and 2011 harvest data. The report recommends:

- **Female Crabs:** While the target is to have 215 million adult female crabs in the Bay, estimates indicate that there were roughly 97 million adult female crabs in the Bay at the beginning of the 2012 crabbing season. While this number is below the target, it is above the overfishing threshold of 70 million adult female crabs. Because the number of female crabs has declined over the past two years, the jurisdictions that manage blue crabs should ensure that harvest of female crabs is limited relative to their overall numbers.
- **Male Crabs:** To keep the overall blue crab fishery viable, managers currently work to ensure the harvest of a certain number of female crabs. In the future, they should also focus on tracking male crab numbers.
- **Recreational Harvest:** Recreational harvest of crabs affects overall crab population figures. To sharpen accuracy of the data, improving estimates of recreational harvest of blue crabs must be made a priority.

"The recent history of blue crabs in the Bay is a success story, thanks to resource managers using science to make important decisions," said Peyton Robertson, director of the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office. "We at NOAA are committed to providing science for managers to use as they ensure a sustainable future for Chesapeake Bay blue crabs."

"NEED QUOTE FROM STATE PERSPECTIVE," said Lynn Fegley of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, current chair of the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee.

The advisory report, posted at **WEB ADDRESS TO COME**, was formally approved by the Chesapeake Bay Program's Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team at a meeting July 16. The Team, chaired by the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, provides a forum to discuss fishery management issues that cross state and other jurisdictional boundaries and better connect sound science to management decision making.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is a regional partnership that has coordinated and conducted the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since 1983. Partners include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the states of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative body; many federal agencies; and advisory groups of citizens, scientists and local government officials. Visit www.chesapeakebay.net.

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