

NJDEP Division of Fish and Wildlife

Bureau of Marine Fisheries
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609-748-2020

RECREATIONAL CRAB POT AND TROT LINE REGULATIONS

THIS IS A SUMMARY OF NEW JERSEY RECREATIONAL CRAB POT AND TROT LINE LAWS. IT IS NOT THE FULL LAW, CONSULT THE DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE FOR FURTHER DETAILS. ALL PERSONS ARE REMINDED THAT THE STATUTES, CODES AND REGULATIONS ARE THE LEGAL AUTHORITIES.

USE OF CRAB POT AND TROT LINES

No individual shall take or attempt to take crabs by means of crab pots or trot lines without having in his or her possession a valid license issued by the Division. You may tend only those pots licensed to you. Single hand lines and collapsible traps do not require a license. Crabs taken with a recreational license may not be sold or used for barter. The maximum harvest and/or possession limit of crabs is one bushel a day. All organisms other than crabs and conchs shall be immediately released. All female crabs having eggs or spawn attached shall be immediately released.

CRAB POTS AND TROT LINES DEFINED

A crab pot shall mean a cube or rectangular shaped device not larger than 30 inches on a side with openings inward for the entrance of crabs. Any similar device may be approved by the Division. The material of which the pot is constructed shall have a mesh not less than one inch across measured at its longest axis. The openings into the interior of the pot shall be oval and not larger than 7 inches wide and 4 inches high.

Non-commercial trot lines shall not exceed 150 feet in length with a maximum of 25 baits attached.

HOURS AND TIME OF FISHING

No license holder shall set any crab pot except between April 6 to December 4 in Delaware Bay and between March 15 and November 30 in all other waters. Crab pots and trot lines may be tended only from 0400 hours (4:00 AM) to 2100 hours (9:00PM) prevailing time, in Delaware Bay and 24 hours a day in all other waters. All crab pots must be checked and emptied of all crabs and other organisms at least once every 72 hours.

PLACEMENT AND MARKING OF POT AND TROT LINES

Each crab pot shall be clearly and visibly marked with a buoy, stake or permanent identification tag bearing the license number of the owner. All crab pot buoys shall be marked with fluorescent or reflective paint, tape or other reflective material or reflectors. Floating line shall not be used on any crab pot or crab pot buoys. Each trotline shall be marked at both ends with a clearly visible stake or buoy.

No pot shall be placed in a creek, ditch, or tributary less than 50 feet wide at mean low water unless approved by the Division. No pot shall be placed in any manmade lagoon or in any marked or chartered channel or in any area designed by the Division as off limits for the commercial catching of crabs except that recreational licensed crab pots may be fastened to a pier or other shore connected structure by a line no longer than twice the depth of the water at the point. At no time shall any pot or trot line be placed in a manner that obstructed or impedes navigation.

SIZE OF CRABS TAKEN

Peeler or shedder crabs 3 inches; soft crabs 3.5 inches and hard crabs 4.5 inches. All measurements are from point to point.

AREAS CLOSED TO COMMERCIAL STYLE CRAB POTS

Cumberland County – Cohansey River, Back Creek, Cedar Creek, Nantuxent Creek, Fortescue Creek, Oranoken Creek and Dividing Creek

Cape May County – West Creek, Bidwell Creek and the Cape May Canal

Atlantic County – Hammock Cove (also known as Dry Bay).

Ocean County – on the eastern shore of Barnegat Bay, that area of the Sedge Island Wildlife Management Area once known as Winter Anchorage, enclosed by a line drawn from the northern bank of Fishing Creek on Island Beach State Park to the northern tip of the Sedge Island (Hensler Island), then south from point to point along the western side of the Sedge Island's Wildlife Management Area and terminating on the most southwestern point of Island Beach State Park.

Man Made Lagoons – Recreationally licensed crab pots may be used if they are fastened to a pier or other shore connected structure by a line no longer than twice the depth of the water at that point.

The closure does not preclude the use of continually tended collapsible crab traps or the use of hand lines, dip nets or rods and reels.

REMINDER TO RECREATIONAL USERS OF COMMERCIAL-STYLE CRAB POTS

If you are setting your pots in open water and marking them with floats, the tide can easily move your pots. Please try to weight your pots to reduce movement if you plan to leave them unattended. Bricks placed in the bottom of the pots are an easy way to decrease movement.

Please be aware that it is illegal to use floating line (such as polypropylene) on any crab pot or crab pot buoy. Use of floating line increases the probability of another boater getting your crab pot line entangled in his or her propeller.

ALL commercial style crab pots must be constructed to include a biodegradable panel to provide a means of escape for marine organisms if a pot becomes abandoned or lost.

ALL commercial style crab pots set in any body of water less than 150' wide at mean low water or in any man made lagoon, must include terrapin excluder devices securely fastened in all funnel entrances.

For information regarding biodegradable panels and terrapin excluder devices, contact the Bureau of Marine Fisheries at 609-748-2020.