

Delaware's 2017 horseshoe crab commercial fishery to close June 22, with harvest quota reached

DOVER – DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife announced today that Delaware's 2017 commercial harvest quota of 162,136 male horseshoe crabs has been met, and that the horseshoe crab fishery will close at 12:01 a.m., Thursday, June 22 in accordance with Delaware law and regulations. The fishery will remain closed the rest of the year.

Horseshoe crabs are managed by the Division of Fish & Wildlife through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Interstate Fishery Management Plan. Annual allocations for the Delaware Bay area states are determined through an innovative adaptive resource management model that takes into account changes in both the horseshoe crab and migratory shorebird populations to address the shorebirds' nutritional needs. Under the management plan, Delaware's 2017 quota allocation was 162,136 male horseshoe crabs. Harvest of female horseshoe crabs is prohibited year-round in Delaware.

Horseshoe crabs are harvested in Delaware for use as bait in the whelk (conch) and American eel fisheries. Horseshoe crabs also play an important role in the ecology of the Delaware Bay, notably by providing migratory shorebirds with the horseshoe crab eggs that fuel their long-distance migrations to Arctic breeding grounds. The horseshoe crab's copper-based blue blood also is used in medical testing and research.

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