

Fisheries Regulatory Scoping April 2016

Please review the following possible regulatory changes. DNR is looking for your advice on how to proceed with scoping (i.e. open houses, web feedback only, etc.).

Blue Crab

Change the time for harvesting blue crabs in the coastal bays to be consistent with the Chesapeake Bay.

Discussion: The Department is considering a change to the commercial start time for crabbing in the Coastal Bays. Currently, a harvester may not remove crabs from gear or set or retrieve crab pots between 2 pm and 5:30 am. Those times are set for April through October. Changing the start time for blue crabs would be more consistent with the Chesapeake Bay regulations and give harvesters flexibility. Additionally, it would allow harvest to occur earlier in the day to avoid high air temperatures which will reduce mortality; allowing more crabs to reach the market.

Possible Options for the Commercial Daily Time Restrictions: The Department is considering 2 options. Both options keep a work day of 8.5 hours. The first option allows a start time of 1 hour before sunrise and the second option allows a start time of ½ hour before sunrise.

Option 1

A person licensed to catch crabs for sale may remove crabs from commercial gear and set or retrieve crab pots in the coastal bays of the Atlantic Ocean and their tidal tributaries;

- (a) Between sunrise and 8.5 hours after sunrise during April and October; and
- (b) Between 1 hour before sunrise to 7.5 hours after sunrise during the period May through September.

Option 2

A person licensed to catch crabs for sale may remove crabs from commercial gear and set or retrieve crab pots in the coastal bays of the Atlantic Ocean and their tidal tributaries;

- (a) Between sunrise and 8.5 hours after sunrise during April and October; and
- (b) Between 1/2 hour before sunrise to 8 hours after sunrise during the period May through September.

Scoping Recommendation: Scope on the Department's website, Constant Contact, Facebook and Twitter.

Oysters — Licenses for Divers

The Department would like to change regulation text related to commercial oyster diving and only require those handling gear and taking the oysters into possession on the vessel to have a commercial license.

Discussion: Currently, the text reads that all individuals aboard a vessel engaged in oyster diving need to have a commercial oyster license. However, other gears are not held to this standard and mates that cull or provide other assistance outside of working gear are not required to have a separate commercial license. The Department would like to make diving consistent with other gear types.

Scoping Recommendation: Scope on the Department's website, Constant Contact, Facebook and Twitter.

Urbana Lake Fishery Management Area

Limit hunting on Urbana Lake Fisheries Management Area to bow hunting only.

Discussion: Urbana Lake is a 60 acre Fisheries Management Area in Frederick County. The property shares borders with a golf course, residential properties, and I-270. Owners of the adjacent properties and the Natural Resources Police (NRP) have expressed concern about firearm use while hunting near the property boundaries. The managers of the property would like to address these concerns while allowing the hunters that use the property to continue their hunting activities. Limiting hunting on Urbana Lake to bow hunting only will address the boundary concerns of neighboring property owners and NRP. Managers will post "No Firearms" signage on the property to publicize that firearms may not be used.

Scoping Recommendation: Scope on the Department's website, Constant Contact, Facebook and Twitter.