



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Mark Belton, Secretary
Joanne Throwe, Deputy Secretary

Mr. Jack Brooks
J. M. Clayton Co.
108 Commerce St.
Cambridge, MD 21613

April 20, 2016

Re: Maryland Blue Crab Sustainability

Dear Mr. Brooks:

Maryland, in coordination with the State of Virginia and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, developed a scientifically guided, conservation-oriented blue crab management strategy that has successfully maintained the female blue crab harvest at safe levels for eight consecutive years.

In 2008, the Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions adopted this coordinated blue crab management strategy based on the recommendations of the [Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee](#) made up of regional scientists and state representatives, which called for limiting the harvest of female crabs in order to maintain a sufficient level of female spawning stock.

Blue crabs are a short-lived crustacean with a complicated life cycle and a high reproductive capacity. Because of this, along with a myriad of environmental factors such as wind and water currents, which have a large impact on the number of small crabs that return to the Chesapeake Bay each year, the abundance is highly variable. If a decrease in abundance does occur, this responsible management strategy allows for enough reserve spawning stock to maintain an adequate population abundance.

The attached graphs illustrate the positive trends in female harvest and abundance that have resulted since the implementation of coordinated blue crab management strategy.

Additionally, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch program recommends Chesapeake Bay blue crabs caught on trotlines as the best global choice for sustainably harvested blue crab. Maryland crabs caught in crab pots are listed as the first *Good Alternative* to trotline-caught Chesapeake Bay crabs. Please see the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch crab page at the following address:

www.seafoodwatch.org/seafood-recommendations/groups/crab?type=blue&q=Crab,%20Blue

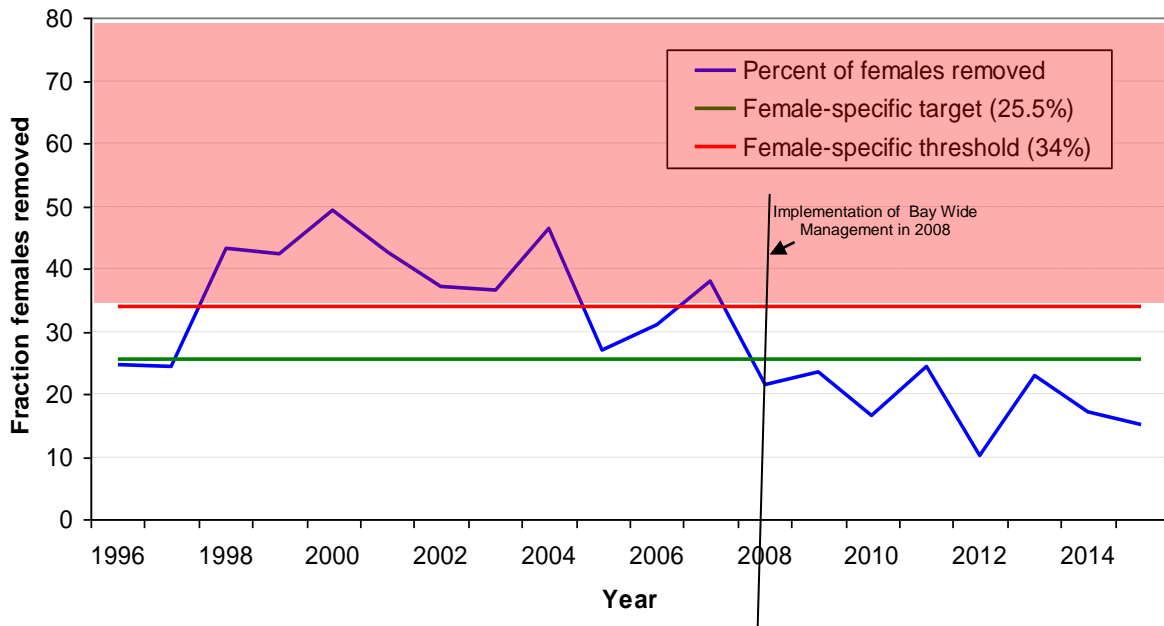
If you have questions regarding the sustainability of Maryland's blue crab population or any other facet of the management of the blue crab fishery in Maryland, please contact Maryland Blue Crab Program manager Brenda Davis at BrendaK.Davis@maryland.gov, 410-260-8267.

David Blazer
Director
Maryland Fisheries Service

Blue Crab Management Strategy and Results:

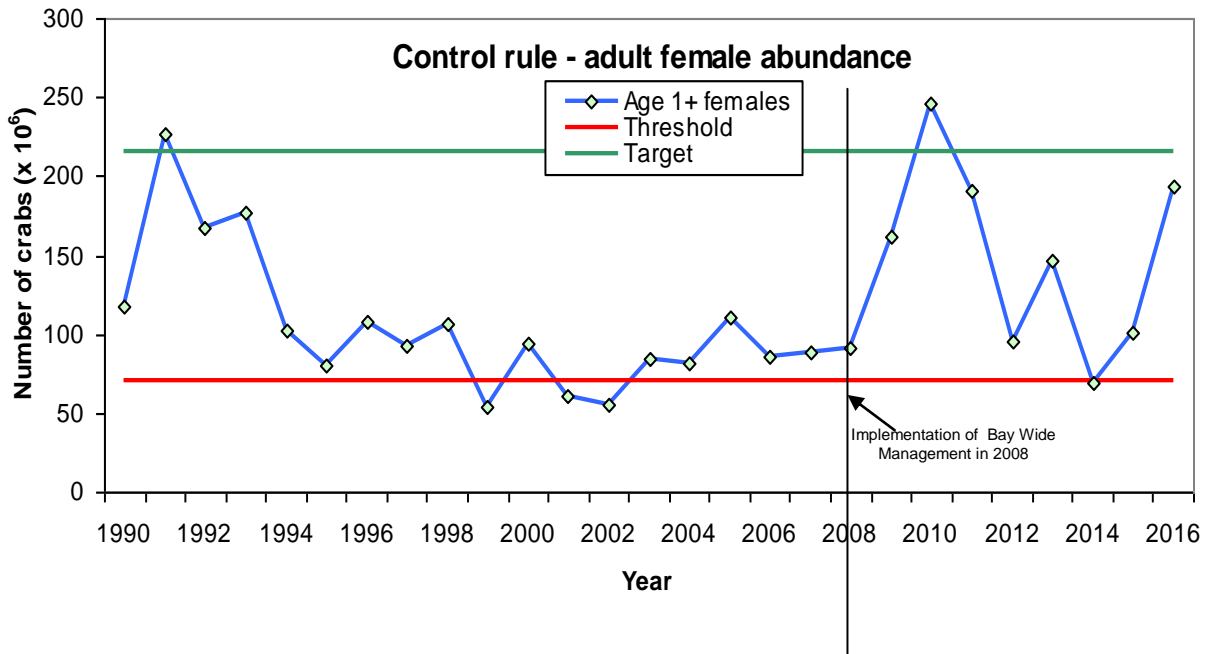
The objective of the current management strategy, which began in 2008, is to manage the **harvest** so the percentage of female crabs removed is around the green, 25.5%, target line, but should not be above the red, 34%, threshold line.

Figure 1. The percentage of all female blue crabs removed from the population each by fishing relative to the female-specific target (25.5%) and threshold (34%) exploitation rates, 1990 through 2015. Exploitation rate for 2015 was approximately 15%.



The objective the current management strategy, which began in 2008, is to have the **abundance** of adult (age 1+ \geq 60 mm carapace width) female crabs around the green, 215 million, line and not drop below the red, 70 million, threshold line.

Figure 2. Winter dredge survey estimate of abundance of age 1+ (\geq 60 mm carapace width) 1990-2016 with female-specific reference points. These are female crabs considered the 'exploitable stock' that will spawn within the coming year.



Crab Recommendations

Our recommendations help you choose seafood that's fished or farmed in ways that have less impact on the environment.



Crab

Blue

SEARCH AGAIN

 [Q](#)

Seafood Watch

[Eco-Certifications](#)



REFINE YOUR SEARCH

What kind is it?

BEST CHOICE	Type	Method	Location
	Crab, Blue (Blue-Claw, Hardshell Crab, Kani, Softshell Crab)	Trotline	Chesapeake Bay