

State Size and Possession Limits

CRUSTACEANS & MOLLUSKS

Regulations in *red* are new this year.

	Open Season	Minimum Length (total length except sharks)	Harvest & Possession Limit (per person unless noted)	Remarks
LOBSTER, AMERICAN				
	See below for closed seasons	3 3/8"	6	A person shall not use any spear, gig, gaff or other penetrating device as a method of capture of lobsters.
BLUE CRAB				
	peeler or shedder	No Closed Season ^e	3"	1 Bushel e: Unless using non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots, trot lines or crab dredges — see below for additional information.
	soft	No Closed Season ^e	3 1/2"	
	hard	No Closed Season ^e	4 1/2"	
HARD CLAM				
	No Closed Season ^f	1 1/2"	150 clams	f: Non-resident license valid only June–Sept. See water classification chart information at https://www.state.nj.us/dep/wms/bmw/nsspshome.html

Crustaceans

American Lobster

The legal possession size limit of whole lobsters, measured from the rear of the eye socket along a line parallel to the center line of the body shell to the rear of the body shell, shall be not less than 3 3/8 inches nor greater than 5 1/4 inches. Lobster parts may not be possessed at sea or landed. There is no harvest or possession of lobster in Lobster Management Area 4 from April 30–May 31 and Lobster Management Area 5 from February 1–March 31.

The possession limit is six lobsters per person. No person shall possess any lobster with eggs attached or from which eggs have been removed or any female lobster with a v-notched tail, as illustrated below.

Special Lobster Restrictions:

No person shall use, leave, deploy, or tend any lobster, fish or conch pot within an artificial reef located in state waters except in areas designated as a full access zones. Within these designated full access zones lobster, fish and conch pots shall be used, left, deployed or tended only between sunrise and sunset.

For information about lobster pot deployment and New Jersey Reef Full Access Zone Locations, go to dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/njfw/marine-letter-lobster.pdf

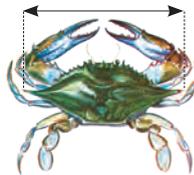
The use of spears, gigs, gaffs or other penetrating devices as a method of capture for lobsters is prohibited. A recreational lobster pot license is required to use pots or traps to capture lobsters. For details call (609) 748-2020. Lobsters taken recreationally may not be sold or offered for sale.



Blue Crabs

- Crabs may be taken recreationally with hand lines, manually operated collapsible traps or scoop nets without a license. A non-commercial crab pot license is required for the use of not more than two non-collapsible Chesapeake-style crab pots (see illustration on page 21) or two trot lines to harvest crabs. See page 21 for the non-commercial crab pot license information.
- It is illegal to harvest or possess more than one bushel of crabs per day per person or offer for sale any crabs without having in your possession a valid commercial crabbing license.
- Minimum size for crabs that may be harvested (measured from point to point of shell) are as follows:
 - Peeler or shedder crab: 3 inches
 - Soft crab: 3 1/2 inches
 - Hard crab: 4 1/2 inches
- All female crabs with eggs attached and all undersized crabs shall be returned to the water immediately.
- Recreational trot lines shall not exceed 150 feet in length with a maximum of 25 baits.
- All pots and trot lines shall be marked with the 9-digit identification number (CID) of the owner.
- All crab pots must be tended at least once every 72 hours.
- No floating line may be used on any crab pot or crab pot buoy.
- No crab pot shall be placed in any area that would obstruct or impede navigation or in any creek less than 50 feet wide.
- Only the owner or a law enforcement officer may raise or remove contents of a legally set fishing device.

Measure crabs point to point.



- Crabs taken with a bait seine may be retained for personal use only if the angler possesses a bait net license, and may not be bartered or sold unless the fisherman possesses a commercial crab license.
- No crabs may be harvested from the Newark Bay Complex. For more information, see *Health Advisory* on page 30.
- Crab Pot/Trot Line seasons:** Delaware Bay and tributaries: April 6–Dec. 4. All other waters: March 15–Nov. 30. The following waters, and their tributaries, are closed to the use of crab pots and trot lines: Cumberland Co.: Cohansey River and creeks named Back, Cedar, Nantuxent, Fortescue, Oranoken and Dividing; Cape May Co.: West and Bidwell Creeks and the Cape May Canal; Atlantic Co.: Hammock Cove (Dry Bay); Ocean Co.: on east shore of Barnegat Bay, that area of Sedge Islands Wildlife Management Area enclosed by a line drawn from the northern bank of Fishing Creek on Island Beach State Park to the northern tip of the Sedge Islands (Hensler Island), then south from point to point along the western side of the Sedge Islands WMA and terminating on the most southwestern point of Island Beach State Park.
- Crab Dredge Seasons:** Delaware Bay and tributaries: Jan. 1 through April 15 and Nov. 15 through Dec. 31. All other waters: Jan. 1 through March 31, Dec. 1 through Dec. 31. Fish and Wildlife will issue a non-commercial crab dredge license for the harvest of not more than one bushel of crabs per day during the crab dredge season. Crabs so taken may not be sold or offered for barter. There is a fee of \$15 for this non-commercial crab dredge license. See page 21 for details on purchasing a non-commercial crab dredge license.

Notice: All non-collapsible Chesapeake-style crab pots (see illustration on page 21) must be constructed to include a biodegradable panel designed to create an opening to allow crabs and

other organisms to escape if the pot is lost or abandoned. All non-collapsible Chesapeake-style crab pots set in any manmade lagoon or any water body less than 150 feet wide must also include a turtle excluder device inside all pot entrance funnels.

Crab Pot License Information

Recreational Crab Pot/Trot Line Licenses and Non-Commercial Crab Dredge Licenses are available for purchase online at: <https://nj.aspirafocus.com/internetsales> or at any NJDEP Fish & Wildlife-certified license agents. For the most current list of NJDEP Fish & Wildlife-certified license agents, go to dep.nj.gov/njfw/licenses-and-permits/license-agents/

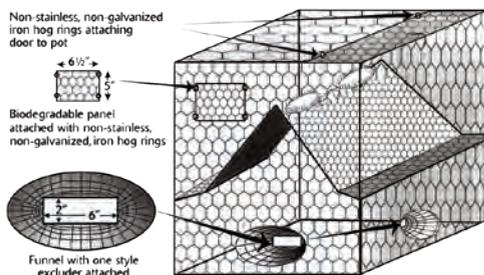
- **Recreational crab pot/trot line license:** \$2
Harvest limit: one bushel per day. Refer to the shellfish regulations on page 20 for all recreational crabbing regulations.
- **Non-commercial crab dredge license:** \$15
Harvest limit: one bushel per day during the crab dredge season. See page 20 for recreational crab regulations.

Terrapin Excluders and Biodegradable Panels Are Required on Chesapeake-Style Crab Pots

NOTE: It is illegal to catch or take diamondback terrapins in New Jersey. Users of non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots note: all pots set in any body of water less than 150-feet wide at mean low tide or in any manmade lagoon MUST include diamondback terrapin excluder devices. Non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots set in any body of water MUST include biodegradable panels.

These crab pot modifications will help reduce the unintentional drowning of terrapins allowing these and other species to escape in the event that pots are lost or abandoned. Terrapin excluder devices must be no larger than 2-inch high by 6-inch wide and securely fastened inside each funnel entrance. Biodegradable panels must measure at least 6½-inch wide by 5-inch high and be located in the upper section of the crab pot. The panel must be constructed of, or fastened to the pot with, wood lath, cotton, hemp, sisal or jute twine not greater than 3/16" diameter, or non-stainless steel, uncoated ferrous metal not greater than 3/32" diameter. The door or a side of the pot may serve as the biodegradable panel ONLY if it is fastened to the pot with any of the material specified above. Crabbers should note: ALL non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots MUST be licensed and marked with the 9-digit identification number (CID) of the owner.

Chesapeake-Style Crab Pot



Mollusks

1. All persons must be licensed to harvest any shellfish. See *Shellfish License Information*. Shellfish means any species of benthic mollusks (except conch) including hard and soft clams, oysters, surf clams, bay scallops and mussels.
2. It is illegal to harvest shellfish from condemned waters, even for bait purposes. It is also illegal to harvest shellfish including surf clams from beaches adjacent to water classified as condemned. Shellfish water classification charts are available from license agents or any state shellfish office. Charts are updated annually.
3. Shellfish harvesting is prohibited before sunrise and after sunset. Shellfish harvest is also prohibited on Sundays except in the seasonally approved areas of the Navesink and Shrewsbury rivers, when harvesting is permitted between Nov. 1 and April 30.
4. Harvesting shellfish on public grounds is restricted to the use of hand implements.
5. It is illegal to harvest shellfish from leased grounds. These grounds are delineated by stakes or buoys set by the lease holder. Charts of the leases may be examined at NJDEP Fish & Wildlife's Nacote Creek or Delaware Bay shellfish offices during regular business hours. Invasion onto leased grounds is punishable by penalties up to \$3,000 and loss of all equipment.

Recreational Shellfishing

1. No holder of any recreational shellfish license may take more than a total of 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. See *Shellfish License Information*.
2. It is illegal to dredge shellfish on public grounds. Use of hand implements are the only legal harvest methods.
3. The minimum size of hard clams that may be harvested is 1½ inches in length. Clams less than 1½ inches in length must immediately be returned to the bottom from which they were taken. Specific seasons, regulations and size limits exist for oyster beds in Great Bay, Delaware Bay, plus the Mullica, Great Egg Harbor and Tuckahoe rivers. Check with the nearest shellfish office (Nacote Creek or Delaware Bay) for these detailed regulations.
4. Shells taken in the process of harvesting oysters must be culled from the live oysters and returned immediately to the area from where they were taken.



Shellfish License Information

A shellfish license (formerly called clamming license) is required for harvesting all species of benthic mollusks (except conchs, addressed in the commercial marine fisheries regulations), including, but not limited to, hard and soft clams, surf clams, oysters, bay scallops and mussels. Other specific commercial shellfish licenses exist such as surf clam dredge, Delaware Bay oyster dredge boat and Delaware Bay licenses to harvest in Areas 1, 2 and 3.

Anyone engaged in any shellfish harvesting activity with someone holding a commercial shellfish license must also possess their own commercial shellfish license.

For shellfishing regulations, see page 20. **Prior to harvesting any shellfish, you must consult the Shellfish Growing Water Classification Charts** published by DEP's Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring, available at shellfish license agents, state shellfish offices, online at nj.gov/dep/bmw/nssp/home.html#charts or call Marine Water Monitoring at (609) 748-2000. Purchase shellfish licenses online at nj.aspirafocus.com/internetsales.

Shellfish License Fees

- **Resident recreational shellfish:** \$10
Harvest limit: 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. Sale of catch prohibited.
- **Non-resident recreational shellfish:** \$20
Harvest limit: 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. Sale of catch prohibited. License valid only during June, July, August and September.
- **Juvenile recreational shellfish:** \$2
For persons under 14 years of age. Subject to same restrictions as resident or nonresident adult recreational license holders.
- **Resident commercial shellfish:** \$50
Unlimited harvest. Shellfish may be sold only to certified dealers.
- **Non-resident commercial shellfish:** \$250
Unlimited harvest. Shellfish may be sold only to certified dealers.
- **Resident senior citizen recreational shellfish license:** FREE lifetime license (\$2 application fee). NJ residents age 62 years or older. Harvest limit: 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. Sale of shellfish prohibited.
- **Disabled veterans:** Fish and Wildlife-certified disabled veterans are eligible for free shellfish license at any shellfish license agent location. To become certified, call (609) 984-6213. 

Shellfish and Non-Commercial Crab Pot License Agents

Current listing now available online at dep.nj.gov/njfw/licenses-and-permits/license-agents/

Note: All license agents statewide can now sell all license and permit privileges.

New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP)

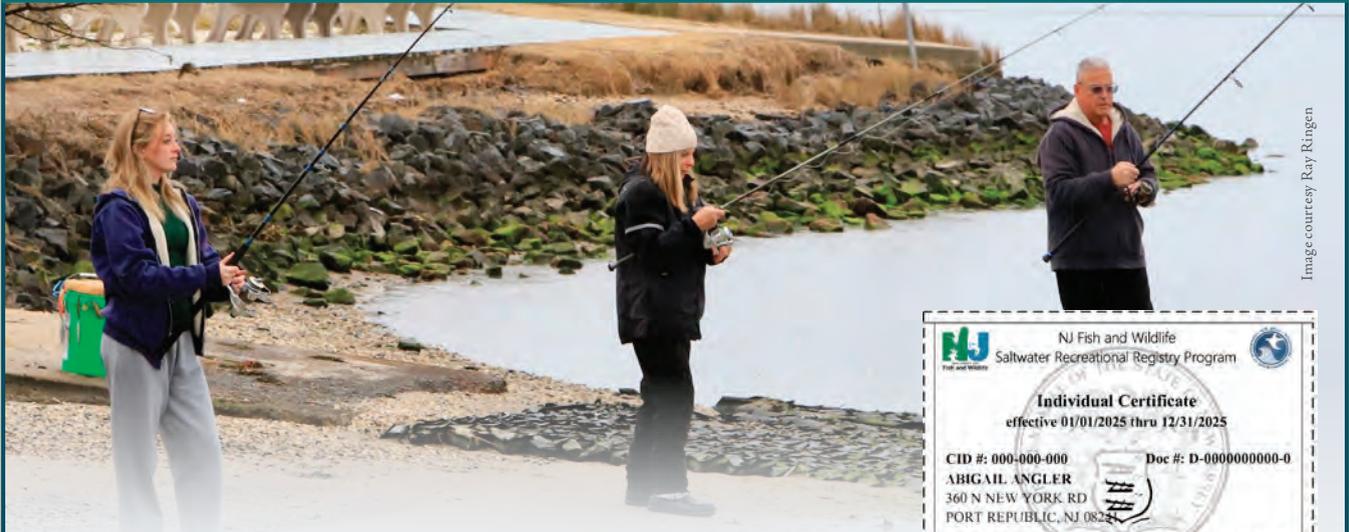


Image courtesy Ray Ringen



*Sample 2025 NJ Saltwater Registry Certificate

Recreational Saltwater Anglers

Before heading out to enjoy one of New Jersey's treasured resources, be aware of saltwater fishing requirements and regulations.

Register. It's free and required!

The Saltwater Registry is meant to be a current contact list for mail and telephone surveys. Participation in the NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP) is vital in achieving accurate recreational fishing estimates, helping to ensure healthy fisheries for generations to come and to better account for the contributions and impacts of saltwater anglers on coastal economies. Do your part to help maintain sustainable fisheries and join the thousands of other anglers who have already registered with the NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program.

- Anyone 16 and older must register before saltwater fishing recreationally in New Jersey.
- If 18 or older, a driver's license, state issued id, passport, Visa or alike is required.
- Anglers 18 or older must fill out the Child Support Certification form annually.
- All for-hire owners and captains must register each recreational saltwater fishing vessel they own or run under their name. It is not necessary for one individual to register as both the captain and owner—once is sufficient.

- Anglers are reminded that registrations expire at the end of each calendar year and must be renewed annually.

* For more information on the **NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program**, visit saltwaterregistry.nj.gov or contact Marine Fisheries staff by emailing saltwaterregistry@dep.nj.gov with any questions.



Child Support Certification Requirement

The Child Support Program Improvement Act requires NJDEP Fish & Wildlife to collect and maintain Social Security numbers and child support obligation certification for all license and registration applications. Certifications must be completed prior to a customer's first purchase each license year regardless of whether the purchase is made online or at a license agent. Saltwater Registrations are **ONLY** available online.

If your first purchase of the year is at a License Agent then the customer must be present to complete the Child Support Certification in person. The online child support certification allows an individual to complete the form from the privacy of their home. Once done, the certification remains valid for the calendar year in which the certification was completed. When the child support form is completed online the customer does not need to be present at the license agent for a purchase to be made on or for their behalf.

NJDEP Fish & Wildlife Website

Visit the NJDEP Fish & Wildlife Website to access saltwater fishing regulations, management updates, public hearing information, data collected from field surveys and more:

dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine



Marine Fisheries: Recreational Surveys

Be Counted...

You may see NJDEP Fish & Wildlife interviewers at marine public access fishing sites conducting the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS). The survey targets marine recreational anglers to obtain information about their fishing effort and catch. The more data collected, the more successful the survey becomes for estimating overall catch, which is an integral factor for managing fisheries.

Marine Fisheries staff are eager to speak with fishing clubs/groups about the importance of the APAIS. We rely heavily on our valued anglers, creating a joint effort to preserve the state's natural resources. Invite us to a group meeting or event. Contact Maryellen Gordon at Maryellen.Gordon@dep.nj.gov. We look forward to meeting you!

NJDEP Fish & Wildlife staff continue to conduct the For-Hire Telephone Survey annually from March through December. Weekly calls are made to vessel operators regarding the previous week's trips. This data is used to estimate fishing effort in the for-hire sector and is combined with APAIS data. 2,142 vessels were contacted averaging approximately 50 vessels per week with just over a 46.9% response rate during 2024.

If you're not contacted directly while out fishing, you can submit an easy, online fishing report after each saltwater trip to the Recreational Saltwater Volunteer Angler Survey at dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine/volunteer-angler-survey/. Your reports have a *real* impact on how our oceans are managed.

APAIS Totals 2024

Month	Site Assignments	Charter Intercepts	Private/Rental Intercepts	Shore Intercepts	Total Intercepts
March	60	0	6	65	71
April	91	15	237	120	372
May	177	71	320	338	729
June	176	97	481	406	984
July	182	121	516	644	1,281
August	181	159	583	384	1,126
September	167	49	246	237	532
October	166	92	342	286	720
November	154	94	489	273	856
December	141	32	93	33	158
	1,495	730	3,313	2,786	6,829

* Out of 1495 assignments, NJ completed 1473. There were 22 assignments cancelled due to weather emergencies and/or lack of availability.



NOAA FISHERIES

Your **Data** Makes a **Difference**

How and Why We Collect Information About Your Recreational Catch

NOAA Fisheries works closely with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to gather recreational fishing data from anglers like you.

Our understanding of saltwater recreational total catch depends on complete and accurate information provided by recreational anglers.

The less survey information we have, the less certain we are of the quality of our catch estimates, which could result in more conservative fishing regulations.

Taking a few minutes to share information about your fishing trip via our in-person shoreside catch survey and our mail effort survey is **one of the most important contributions you can make** to help balance optimal fishing opportunities with the protection of marine resources.

Please note: Field interviewers play no role in law enforcement. We value your privacy and any personal information collected is kept confidential.

Photo: NJ Department of Environmental Protection



How We Use Your Data

NOAA Fisheries collects catch and trip data from **thousands of New Jersey anglers** and for-hire captains to produce estimates of total catch for many species.



These estimates **complement other data**, such as **commercial catch**, **biological information**, and **direct observations of fish stocks**.

Stock assessment scientists evaluate this data to determine the **health of our fisheries**.



Working with **anglers and other partners**, federal and state fisheries managers use this information to make informed fisheries management plans and decisions.

We work with regional and state partners to **review catch estimates before they are published on our website**. The estimates are broken down by species, state, region, and type of fishing (shore, private boat, for-hire vessel).



countmyfish.noaa.gov

Motor Boat Registration & Title Requirements and Boating Safety Information

Registration

Most boats must be registered to operate on New Jersey waterways.

- All titled boats must be registered.
- **Any boat (including jet skis and non-titled watercraft), mechanically propelled (including electric motors), regardless of length, must be registered.**
- Boats greater than 12 feet in length, regardless of propulsion means, must be titled and registered at an MVC office.

Boats and marine equipment that do not need to be registered:

- Those not based in New Jersey, or operating here less than 180 consecutive days, that are operating under a federally approved numbering system from another state
- Ship's lifeboats
- Non-motorized vessels used exclusively on small lakes and ponds on private property

- Racing vessels with New Jersey State Marine Police permit
- Non-motorized inflatable device, surfboard, racing shell, dinghy, canoe or kayak
- Non-motorized vessel less than 12 feet in length

Title

For use on New Jersey waterways, all boats more than 12 feet in length must be titled, with the exception of ship's lifeboat, canoe, kayak, inflatable, surfboard, rowing scull, racing shell, tender/dinghy used for direct transportation between a vessel and shore for no other purposes.

Boat Safety Certificate (NJSP)

A boat safety certificate (from an **approved** boat safety course; see NJSP website, below) is **required** to operate a personal watercraft or power vessel, including electric motors, in NJ waters (tidal and non-tidal).

Boat Operator License (MVC)

An operator license is required to operate power vessels on fresh, non-tidal waters such as lakes, creeks and rivers. (Minimum age 16 years; with certain exceptions.)

PFD Requirements

Between November 1 and May 1, no operator of a recreational vessel less than 26 feet, shall permit its operation unless each person on board is wearing a securely fastened US Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device. For details, visit https://nj.gov/njsp/marine-services/current_events.shtml

For More Information:

New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC)
(888) 486-3339 toll free in NJ or (609) 292-6500 from out-of-state
nj.gov/mvc/vehicles/boating.htm

New Jersey State Police (NJSP)
(609) 882-2000
njsp.org/marine-services

Vibrio: What you should know

Stay safe and healthy at the shore this and every summer by being aware that with higher water temperatures comes an increased chance of illness from *Vibrio*, a naturally occurring bacteria found in warm, salty marine waters. Although *Vibrio* can infect anyone, individuals with compromised immune systems are more likely to experience illness. Contracting *Vibrio* can occur by subjecting open wounds (recent cuts, piercings, tattoos, etc.) to marine waters or eating raw or undercooked seafood.

Enjoy New Jersey's beautiful beaches and variety of seafood but if you're immunocompromised, please follow these tips:

- Stay out of salt or brackish water
- Cover wounds with waterproof bandages
- Wear proper foot protection to prevent cuts caused by shells and rocks
- Wear protective gloves when handling raw seafood
- Know that you have a higher risk of illness when eating raw or undercooked seafood and shellfish
- Beware of cross-contamination
- Discard any shellfish with open shells before cooking and those that don't open during cooking
- Seek medical attention if you have a wound that is swollen, red, or feels hot to the touch after exposure to seawater, raw seafood or its juices



YOUR DOLLARS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

State and Federal partnership improves NJ's fishing opportunities



Your fees and Sport Fish Restoration dollars produce the following benefits:

- Management of public waters
- Artificial reef development
- Marine sport fish research
- Development and management of public fishing areas
- Creation of aquatic education programs
- Development and maintenance of boating-associated access facilities throughout the state



When you purchase fishing equipment, motors, sonar and motorboat fuel in New Jersey, excise tax dollars – paid by manufacturers of that equipment – come back to New Jersey to support marine fisheries!



This is the federal Sport Fish Restoration Program!