

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly

2001 Session

FISCAL NOTE

Revised

House Bill 1021 (Delegate Weir)

Environmental Matters

Economic and Environmental Affairs

Crabs - Restrictions on Harvesting and Requirements for Regulations

This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to adopt regulations requiring each commercial crab licensee to declare a Sunday or Monday as a day off for the license year. This declared day off must be clearly displayed on the individual's license and vessel. The bill provides for certain holiday weekend exemptions to the day off provisions and permits DNR to adopt regulations that allow the department discretion to establish alternate days off for a licensee other than a Sunday or Monday.

The bill authorizes DNR to restrict licensees from crabbing on certain days of the week. To the extent possible, these restrictions must be based on considerations that may not discriminate unfairly among groups of fishermen or have allocation as its sole purpose.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2001 and sunsets May 31, 2004.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements could be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Any person who owns or is in charge of operating a vessel utilized to catch crabs in the waters of the State for commercial purposes must obtain a license.

DNR may adopt rules and regulations to restrict catching and possessing any blue crab, to establish seasons to catch crabs, and for other specified purposes. DNR has proposed emergency regulations establishing the commercial crabbing day off provisions in the bill.

Background: The blue crab is one of the most important species harvested in the bay and generates approximately \$90 million in economic benefit to the State. In the past several years, the blue crab harvest has decreased substantially. According to DNR, about 57 million pounds of blue crab were landed in 1993; in 1999, landings of blue crab totaled about 32 million pounds. In 2000, Maryland's crab harvest hit a record low, with watermen landing a reported 21.9 million pounds.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader – February 26, 2001
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