

## Chapter 401

**(Senate Bill 59)**

AN ACT concerning

**Crabs – Harvest Times – ~~Trotlines and Crab Pots~~ Holidays**

FOR the purpose of requiring the Department of Natural Resources to adopt regulations that ~~provide~~ authorize ~~the option to~~ a tidal fish licensee authorized to catch crabs using ~~trotlines and crab pots~~ all legal gear to work ~~certain hours during certain time periods~~ 1 additional early hour on certain days; ~~requiring a licensee who chooses a certain hours of work option to notify the Department of that choice by a certain date;~~ ~~prohibiting a licensee who chooses a certain hours of work option from changing that option until the following license year;~~ ~~requiring a licensee who chooses a certain hours of work option to affix a certain display on the licensee's vessel signifying the choice of that option;~~ and generally relating to harvest times for catching crabs ~~using trotlines and crab pots.~~

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
 Article – Natural Resources  
 Section 4–803  
 Annotated Code of Maryland  
 (2012 Replacement Volume and 2016 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

**Article – Natural Resources**

4–803.

(a) The Department may adopt rules and regulations to effectuate the following purposes:

- (1) To restrict catching and possessing any blue crab;
- (2) The methods by which crabs are taken;
- (3) To close or open any specified area to catch crabs;
- (4) To prohibit or restrict devices used to catch crabs;
- (5) To establish seasons to catch crabs;
- (6) To establish that the workday for tidal fish licensees who catch crabs using trotline gear may begin earlier than 1 hour before sunrise; and

(7) To establish minimum size limits for hard, soft, and peeler crabs. However, this section does not permit the Department to change existing license fees for catching, picking, canning, packing, or shipping cooked hard or soft crabs or crab meat; or for selling, or shipping live hard or soft crabs by barrel or crate. The Department may set license fees on types of gear or equipment if not otherwise set by law.

(b) (1) The Department may not adopt regulations to:

(i) Restrict a tidal fish licensee who catches crabs using trotline gear to a workday of less than 8 hours per day, excluding time spent setting or taking up gear; or

(ii) Establish time restrictions on a tidal fish licensee using trotline gear for setting and taking up gear.

(2) ~~IF EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION, IF~~ the Department authorizes the workday to begin earlier than 1 hour before sunrise, then:

(i) ~~{The} SUBJECT TO SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION, THE~~ Department may not adopt regulations to restrict a tidal fish licensee who catches crabs using trotline gear to a workday of less than 11 hours per day, including time spent setting or taking up gear; and

(ii) Trotline gear may not be set earlier than the catch time established by the Department.

**(C) ~~(1)~~ THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS THAT ~~PROVIDE~~ AUTHORIZE THE OPTION TO A TIDAL FISH LICENSEE WHO IS AUTHORIZED TO CATCH CRABS USING TROT LINES OR CRAB POTS ALL LEGAL GEAR TO WORK THE FOLLOWING HOURS 1 ADDITIONAL EARLY HOUR ON LABOR DAY, MEMORIAL DAY, JULY 4, AND THE DAY BEFORE EACH OF THESE HOLIDAYS IN A LICENSE YEAR:**

**~~(i) FOR A LICENSEE WHO USES TROTLINE GEAR, HOURS THAT BEGIN 2 HOURS BEFORE SUNRISE AND END 8 HOURS AFTER SUNRISE, NOT INCLUDING TIME SPENT SETTING OR TAKING UP GEAR; OR~~**

**~~(ii) FOR A LICENSEE WHO USES CRAB POTS, HOURS THAT BEGIN 1.5 HOURS BEFORE SUNRISE AND END 6.5 HOURS AFTER SUNRISE.~~**

**~~(2) (i) A LICENSEE WHO CHOOSES THE OPTION OF WORKING THE EARLIER HOURS UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION FOR A LICENSE YEAR SHALL NOTIFY THE DEPARTMENT OF THAT CHOICE BY AUGUST 31 OF THE PREVIOUS LICENSE YEAR.~~**

~~(H) AFTER A LICENSEE CHOOSES THE EARLY HOURS OPTION FOR THE LICENSE YEAR, THE LICENSEE MAY NOT CHANGE OPTIONS UNTIL THE FOLLOWING LICENSE YEAR.~~

~~(3) A LICENSEE WHO CHOOSES THE EARLY HOURS OPTION SHALL AFFIX A DISPLAY ON THE LICENSEE'S VESSEL IN A FORM AND MANNER DETERMINED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO SIGNIFY THE CHOICE OF THE EARLY HOURS OPTION.~~

[(c)] (D) The Department's regulations may not become effective under this section until the Department first holds public hearings. The Department shall advertise the time, place, and purpose of the hearings in one newspaper of general daily circulation in the State, and at least in one newspaper circulated in the affected region of each county whose waters may be directly affected by the proposed regulations at least once per week for 2 successive weeks in advance of the hearings.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2017.

Approved by the Governor, May 4, 2017.