



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

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February 29, 2024

The Honorable David A. Bennett
Chairman
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: H 7440 An Act Relating to Fish and Wildlife – Lobsters and Other Crustaceans

Dear Chairman Bennett,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 7440, which would remove a statutory prohibition on the taking of blue crabs between sunset and sunrise. DEM supports this legislation.

Although more commonly associated with the Chesapeake Bay, blue crabs are also found in Rhode Island waters and are commercially and recreationally harvested. While DEM tracks commercial harvest, there is no recreational harvest reporting metric, and thus total recreational landings are largely unknown. Rhode Island currently has a statutory prohibition on taking blue crabs at nighttime, which is unique compared to our neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut. By removing the statutory language, the DEM Division of Marine Fisheries will be able to fully regulate the blue crab recreational fishery and potentially allow nighttime harvesting to occur if they deem the population can support additional, nighttime harvest. This process would be consistent with existing management of many other types of recreational fisheries in Rhode Island and allows for a variety of factors - including public feedback, scientific advice, enforcement concerns, and socioeconomic considerations - to be considered as part of management decisions.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on this legislation and would be pleased to make ourselves available as needed. Please feel free to contact Conor McManus, Ph. D., Chief of the DEM Division of Marine Fisheries, at conor.mcmanus@dem.ri.gov should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terrence Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

cc: Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
The Honorable Jennifer Boylan
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director