

**R.I. Marine Fisheries Statutes and Regulations
PART XV - LOBSTERS, OTHER CRUSTACEANS,
AND HORSESHOE CRABS**

15.24 Horseshoe Crabs – It is illegal for any person to harvest horseshoe crabs, Limulus polyphemus, in Rhode Island for commercial purposes without a valid commercial marine fishing license and a Horseshoe Crab Harvest Permit; or to harvest horseshoe crabs for recreational purposes without a Horseshoe Crab Harvest Permit.

15.24.1 Harvest Permit – Persons harvesting horseshoe crabs from the shoreline or waters in the State of Rhode Island must apply for a Horseshoe Crab Harvest Permit from the Division of Fish and Wildlife. A Horseshoe Crab Harvest Permit is required for all harvesters of horseshoe crabs. Horseshoe Crab Harvest Permits shall be valid only for the calendar year of issuance. The conditions of the permit require a weekly report of landings either by telephone or in writing. In addition, a monthly report in writing is required on forms furnished by the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The report must include the number of crabs taken, locations of harvest, and use (bait, biomedical purposes, or other reasons). These reports shall not be made public and shall be kept only for statistical purposes. Failure to report will result in forfeiture of the Harvest Permit and/or revocation of license and permit as provided for in RIGL 20-4-5.

15.24.2 Quota – A total allowable harvest (quota) of horseshoe crabs for the bait fishery and biomedical industry will be established annually. The quota will be the amount allocated to the State of Rhode Island by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) or as determined by the R.I. Division of Fish and Wildlife based on the current stock status. The quota may only be harvested by licensed, permitted commercial fishermen in accordance with all rules and regulations promulgated by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.

15.24.3 Possession

- A. **Commercial – Bait and biomedical fishery** – Any person issued a valid commercial marine fishing license and Horseshoe Crab Harvest Permit may possess horseshoe crabs in numbers not to exceed the established annual quota. Horseshoe crabs employed in the biomedical industry for purposes of extracting bodily fluids shall be returned to the waters from which they came within 72 hours following the completion of the intended biomedical procedure.

- B. **Recreational** – Any R.I. resident with a Horseshoe Crab Harvest Permit may possess not more than five (5) horseshoe crabs in any calendar day.
- C. **Prohibition on possession of non-indigenous horseshoe crab species - No person shall possess or attempt to possess any non-indigenous (non-native) Horseshoe Crab species in the cooked or un-cooked (frozen) state within the State of Rhode Island without prior, written authorization by the Department.**

15.24.4 Harvesting Restrictions

- A. No person shall harvest horseshoe crabs for commercial or recreational purposes on or within 100 feet seaward of Patience and Prudence Islands in Narragansett Bay.
- B. No person shall harvest horseshoe crabs from waters or shoreline of the state during the period 48-hours preceding and 48-hours following the new and full moons during the months of May, June, and July, annually.

(DEM - Director REGULATIONS)