HORSESHOE CRAB RECOVERY COALITION

Welcome to our newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of our Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition newsletter. We are now more than 40 members strong and are committed to the following goals:

1. Manage horseshoe crab bait fisheries to end the killing of all female horseshoe crabs to ensure that populations are large enough to support the needs of other species like red knots and weakfish that consume their eggs.

2. Institute policies that reform the horseshoe crab bleeding industry to reduce mortality and other impacts.

3. Encourage pharmaceutical companies to adopt the use of synthetic LAL alternatives for use in testing procedures.

4. Raise awareness of the importance of the horseshoe crab by engaging volunteers in efforts to conserve crabs across the coast.

Read more about us here.

ASMFC Proposes New Guidelines Harmful to Horseshoe Crabs and Shorebirds

A management board within the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has accepted a proposal that poses a significant threat to the red knot, whose numbers reached a record low in Delaware Bay last spring. The board approved a revision to the management of horseshoe crabs that would likely result in an Endangered Species Act violation. Defenders of Wildlife, New Jersey Audubon, and Earthjustice have sent a letter to ASMFC expressing concerns that the proposal could end the prohibition on killing female horseshoe crabs for use as fishing bait. Horseshoe crab eggs are a crucial food source for the red knot.

In response to the board's decision, Eric Stiles, president and CEO at New Jersey Audubon, said: "Now is not the time for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to move forward with a proposal that would further destabilize horseshoe crab and red knot populations along Delaware Bay. Rushing such a decision could have tragic consequences for both species and the overall ecosystem of the bay."

ASMFC has said there will be opportunities for public comment before any changes are implemented. Read more here.

Bleeding Company Wants More Access to S.C. Beaches

A company that bleeds horseshoe crabs for biomedical testing is seeking permission to expand its harvest territory along the S.C. coast, raising concerns from scientists and environmentalists who say that could further endanger a threatened migratory bird dependent on the crab and deprive the crab population of a place to recover. Read more here.

Groups File Suit Over Horseshoe Crab Pens

A lawsuit has been filed against the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Charles River Laboratories, over so-called horseshoe crab pens.

The lawsuit, filed by the Southern Environmental Law Center representing Defenders of Wildlife and the Coastal Conservation League, claims the two entities are violating the Endangered Species Act by allowing harvesters to keep horseshoe crabs captive in manmade ponds. The groups say it's a practice only permitted in South Carolina. Read more here.

More S.C. News

The Charleston Post and Courier published a major investigative piece on the relationship between the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Charles River Labs. You can read it here.

Science and Stewardship Program Set to Launch

This year, the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition is launching an effort to collect important data on horseshoe crab populations along the Atlantic Coast.

A number of state-based groups and individuals are conducting horseshoe crab spawning surveys this year. We will work with partners to implement a standardized method of data collection, which will result in more easily aggregated and concise population estimates, and consistent and powerful data to estimate and manage horseshoe crab populations.

The Coalition will also create a contact list of state natural resource agencies and state partners that currently collect spawning data. Through a Stewardship and Community Science Working Group, we will link these entities, improving coordination, data sharing and communication . Please stay tuned for updates on this important initiative. We will be posting regular updates through our social media pages.

Partner Profile: Save Coastal Wildlife

Since 2009, volunteers with the Save Coastal Wildlife nonprofit have been monitoring the spawning activity of horseshoe crabs beside the edge of Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay in New Jersey. Although the largest population of spawning horseshoe crabs can be found not far away in Delaware Bay, people are often surprised to discover that the busy and bustling waters around New York Harbor have crabs too. But for how long?

Monitoring activities by Save Coastal Wildlife show a

population of horseshoe crabs that are less than robust. The female population is in decline. When it started this project, female crabs accounted for about 47 percent of the total population, but today females make up only between 20 to 25 percent of the total horseshoe crab population.

Research by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has backed up the organization's findings. In 2019, ASMFC listed the status of the New York region Horseshoe Crab population, including Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay in New Jersey, as trending downward from good, to neutral, and now poor. Similar results have been found in Long Island Sound where researchers from Project Limulus based at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT show the numbers of horseshoe crabs have steadily declined over the past 20 years.

Members of Save Coastal Wildlife believe that both the bait industry in New York State for eels and whelks, as well as the biomedical industry, which harvests horseshoe crabs out of New York waters and ships them to Massachusetts, is having an impact. As a result, Save Coastal Wildlife has started a petition on Change.org to raise public awareness and tell legislatures and the Governor of New York State to stop killing horseshoe crabs for bait and blood. Please help save horseshoe crabs around New York Harbor by signing their petition here.

Volunteers from Save Coastal Wildlife

Follow Us on Social Media

Facebook
Twitter
Instagram
YouTube
TikTok