



HORSESHOE CRAB RECOVERY COALITION

November 13, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Please Sign the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act (S.3185A/ A.10140)

Dear Governor Hochul,

On behalf of more than 50 national, state and local conservation groups and healthcare organizations that comprise its membership, the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition encourages you to sign the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act (S.3185A/ A.10140) this year, a vital step toward saving New York's dwindling horseshoe crab population.

Horseshoe Crabs are among the oldest and most iconic species to grace beachfronts along the Eastern Seaboard. Many of us remember the time when the spectacle of horseshoe crabs spawning in large numbers along the coast was a sure sign that summer was on the way.

Unfortunately, this is a sight few people witness today.

Horseshoe Crab Populations Are Suffering

The horseshoe crab population has been falling since the 1980s, and the problem is especially acute in New York. Sites along Long Island have considerably reduced numbers compared to past observations, and few individuals exist in areas previously home to large horseshoe crab populations. Of 68 beaches monitored in a 2015 study, there was an 8.2 percent increase in beaches exhibiting no breeding activity. The late Dr. Jennifer Mattei, a leading horseshoe crab researcher from Sacred Heart University, concluded that "due to very low population numbers, the horseshoe crab is functionally extinct in Long Island Sound."

Harvest of the breeding population, including illegal harvesting, is a major cause of population decline in the sound. Other stressors include loss of habitat (both marsh and sandy areas), pollution, bycatch in ghost nets and abandoned lobster traps as well as

entrapment in intake pipes of power plants. The Horseshoe Crab Protection Act is the most immediately impactful action New York can take to give this species a fighting chance.

Biomedical Alternatives to Horseshoe Crab Blood Are Approved

The increased use of horseshoe crab blood in biopharmaceutical testing is also troubling, with the biomedical harvest nearly doubling, from 500,000 animals to 920,000 between 2018 and 2022.

Taking more of a diminishing resource is not sustainable, putting wildlife as well as pharmaceutical supply chains at increased risk. Fortunately, synthetic alternatives to horseshoe crab derived lysate have recently been recognized as equivalent by the US Pharmacopeia, which sets quality standards for the pharmaceutical industry.

Eli Lilly is using the synthetic to test some of its most important medicines, including therapies for diabetes, obesity and COVID-19. At least seven other leading global pharmaceutical companies have made commitments to transition away from or dramatically reduce their use of horseshoe crab blood.

Fortunately, no permits have been issued for biomedical bleeding in New York. Codifying this into law will ensure this unnecessary practice never begins in the Empire State, and the availability of synthetic equivalents to horseshoe crab blood will make this cruel practice obsolete as more pharmaceutical companies adopt the new synthetics.

A Healthy Horseshoe Crab Population Promotes Biodiversity

A healthy horseshoe crab population promotes biodiversity along our shores. Their eggs are a critical food source for migrating shorebirds, including state and federally threatened birds, such as the Red Knot. Red Knots have suffered substantial population declines and could become extirpated from New York State if horseshoe crab numbers are depleted to the point that our beaches can no longer serve as staging areas during their 9,000-mile migration to the Arctic Circle. Sharks, sportfish, sea turtles, and other species also feed on horseshoe crabs and their eggs and larvae.

Neighboring New Jersey has had a bait harvest prohibition in place since 2008. The horseshoe crab harvest in New York currently undercuts that moratorium by taking crabs breeding in Raritan Bay and other northern New Jersey estuaries. A New York moratorium would complement the efforts underway in New Jersey and Connecticut, where a hand harvest ban was enacted in 2023.

We Urge You to Sign S.3185A/ A.10140

If we do not take swift action to protect horseshoe crabs, we risk losing a vital component of our marine ecosystem and the many species that depend on it. The consequences of such a loss could be devastating, both ecologically and economically.

We urge you to sign the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act into law. By doing so, you will not only safeguard these ancient creatures but also ensure a healthier and more resilient future for our state's coastal environment.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Members of the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition:

American Bird Conservancy	Mass Audubon
American Littoral Society	National Wildlife Federation Northeast
Audubon New York	Regional Center
Center for Biological Diversity	New Jersey Audubon
The Connecticut Audubon Society	Physicians Committee for Responsible
Delaware Audubon	Medicine
Delaware Riverkeeper	Revive and Restore
Humane Society of the United States	The Safina Center
National Audubon Society	Save Coastal Wildlife
Maryland Ornithological Society	Wildlife Restoration Partnerships
The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk	