



October 29, 2025

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

Re: Sign on Letter in Support of the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act (S.4289/A.4997)

Dear Gov. Hochul,

On behalf of the undersigned member organizations of the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition (HCRC), we are writing to urge you to sign the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act into law in 2025. This is a renewed chance to protect the American Horseshoe Crab, which is a native species beloved by New Yorkers.

In vetoing a similar measure last year, New York failed to join its counterparts in New Jersey and Connecticut in protecting a keystone species whose populations plummeted before the turn of the century and have never recovered. Since your 2024 veto, new research from The Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk, CT, revealed consistent annual declines of up to 9 percent in horseshoe crab counts throughout Long Island Sound.

Legislators again are attempting to conserve the ancient animals because they recognize the American horseshoe crab is in peril. Horseshoe crabs have been described as functionally extinct¹ in the Long Island Sound, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has consistently described the health of the New York population as poor.

In your veto message a year ago, you cited lunar closures as a means of protecting horseshoe crabs. Lunar closures are not sufficient in protecting horseshoe crabs. Harvest still occurs, just at a later time, putting pressure on a population that is far below healthy historic population levels. You also stated that you have directed the New York Department of Environmental Conservation to “evaluate and implement” further measures to combat overharvesting. We respectfully ask what measures have actually been taken or are being considered. We urge you to enact this legislation to fulfill your commitment to protect horseshoe crabs.

Additionally, we wanted to clarify that no horseshoe crabs are currently being harvested in New York for biomedical purposes. Therefore, the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act would solidify and maintain this reality.

Major pharmaceutical companies such as Eli Lilly and Pfizer recognize that synthetic equivalents can be used instead of horseshoe crab blood in testing medicines. Among the medicines and vaccines tested with the synthetic and approved by the US FDA are leading products for diabetes, obesity, COVID-19 and others. These treatments are being prescribed to millions of Americans, protecting human health and advancing horseshoe crab conservation.

Lastly, while horseshoe crabs are primarily used as bait for eel and whelk, it is critical to highlight that ASMFC describes the American eel stock as depleted, with its population at or near historically low levels. The species is classified as Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, indicating a very high risk of extinction in the wild². Similarly, whelk populations have suffered in recent years and are extremely vulnerable to overfishing³. It is unsustainable to use a declining species (horseshoe crabs) as bait for other declining species (eel and whelk). Moreover, there are bait alternatives available that can be deployed in lieu of horseshoe crabs.

Why your administration should support the bill

The HCRC believes there are four compelling reasons your administration should allow the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act to become law:

- **Environmental Leadership & Legacy:** Signing this bill positions you as a strong environmental leader, safeguarding New York's unique coastal ecosystems and securing the future of a vital species. This action aligns with public demand for conservation and builds a positive legacy for your administration.
- **Protecting Biodiversity & Economic Value:** The ban protects horseshoe crabs, a keystone species essential for the survival of endangered or threatened birds like the Red Knot, which are a draw for ecotourism. This act demonstrates a commitment to biodiversity, which also supports local economies dependent on healthy coastal environments.
- **Aligning with Neighboring States & Scientific Consensus:** By signing, New York will align with the neighboring states of Connecticut and New Jersey, demonstrating a unified regional approach to horseshoe crab protection.
- **Responsible Governance & Public Health Innovation:** The bill reflects responsible governance by prioritizing long-term ecosystem health while acknowledging the availability of synthetic alternatives for biomedical testing. This forward-thinking approach will appeal to constituents who value both conservation and scientific advancement.

A healthy horseshoe crab population is crucial for biodiversity. Their eggs are a vital food source for migrating shorebirds, including the Red Knot, recognized as threatened both under the US

Endangered Species Act and by New York State. Failure to act now risks devastating consequences for our marine ecosystem and the many species that depend on it.

We would be happy to meet with representatives of your administration to discuss our concerns in more detail.

Sincerely,

Members of the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition

American Bird Conservancy
American Littoral Society
Center for Biological Diversity
Connecticut Audubon
Defenders of Wildlife
Group for the East End
Menhaden Defenders
New Jersey Audubon
New York State Ornithological Association
NYC Bird Alliance
NY/NJ Baykeeper
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Revive & Restore
Save Coastal Wildlife
Saw Mill River Audubon Society

References:

1. [Testimony of Dr. Jennifer Mattei](#), Response to call from CTDEEP on public hearing regarding H.B. 5140, an act concerning the hand-harvesting of horseshoe crabs in the state, February 20, 2022
2. [Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, American Eel, Species Information](#)
3. [NY DEC Announces Proposed Changes to Whelk Harvesting Requirements, April 21, 2021](#)