Recreational Crab Fishing
N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries

Recreational harvest limits

- 5-inch minimum size limit for males and immature females.
- 6 ¾ -inch maximum size limit for females from Sept. 1-April 30
- 50 crabs per day per person, not to exceed 100 crabs per vessel per day.
- Size limit is measured from tip-to-tip of the carapace

Information on how to identify male and female crabs can be found at http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/blue-crabs

License requirements

Individuals do not need a license to set one pot per person from a private pier or shoreline, so long as he has permission of the property owner. A private pier or shoreline means there is no public access and does not apply to fishing piers where the public pays for fishing privileges. Recreational harvest limits apply. Sale of catch is prohibited. No buoy or identification required.

Individuals do not need a license for chicken necking or legging. Recreational harvest limits apply. Sale of catch is prohibited.

Individuals do not need a license to use collapsible crab traps so long as the largest open dimension is no larger than 18 inches and the traps are designed to collapse at all times when in the water, except when they are being retrieved from or lowered to the bottom. Recreational harvest limits apply. Sale of catch is prohibited.

Otherwise, a Recreational Commercial Gear License (RCGL) is required.

License cost

- $35 for N.C. Residents
- $250 for non-residents
- A person who is under 16 years of age may fish with authorized gear without a license if he is accompanied by a licensed parent, grandparent or guardian
- Recreational harvest limits apply
- Seafood harvested under this license may not be sold

RCGL crab pot requirements

- Maximum of 5 crab pots, with or without a vessel
- Pots must be marked with one hot pink buoy, attached to a non-floating line, that identifies the owner. The identification must be either engraved on the buoy or on engraved metal or plastic tags attached to the buoy. Identification must include **one of the following:** the owner's last name and initials or gear owner's current motor boat registration number, or (2) owner's US vessel documentation name.
- The pots must be fished at least every 5 days
- The pots may not be fished at night
- Peeler pots may not be used

Other regulations pertaining to crab pots

- Pots must be removed from North Carolina coastal waters between Jan. 15 and Feb. 7
- Pots may not be set in prohibited pot areas. Maps of designated pot areas may be downloaded at http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/designated-pot-areas

A RCGL is required to use a multi-bait or multi-hook trotline

- Maximum one line per person
- Line may be no longer than 100 feet

For information on North Carolina's marine resources, check out the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries' website at http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/home or by telephone at 800-682-2632 or P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557.

6/26/12