

Terrapin are found in Maryland's estuarine waters



The Terrapin Petition to close Maryland's Diamondback Terrapin Fishery

Why a petition?

Diamondback terrapins are one of the treasures of the Chesapeake Bay. Once a traditional food source, terrapin were "fished" with such intensity that their populations crashed by the late 1920's.

Today market demand has surged again; not for local consumption but for Asian food markets both here and overseas. Often sold by out-of-state dealers, one wanted to purchase them by the ton.

Terrapin, like all turtles, have life spans that are more similar to our own than to any fish. Here in Maryland, terrapin do not mature until they are 8-13 years old and may live well beyond their 50's. Like sea turtles, very few young survive to become adults themselves.

Combined with threats that include drowning in crab and eel pots and nets, getting hit by cars on coastal roads, predation of nests and loss of nesting habitat, turtle biologists all agree that terrapins cannot sustain a commercial fishery.

One study on the Patuxent documents a 75% decline. Since terrapins stay close to home and live in local populations, we want to make sure we don't lose them again from any of the Chesapeake's shores.

Maryland is one of the last states to allow the commercial fishing of terrapin. Join us and ask Governor Ehrlich and the DNR Fisheries Service to protect the Chesapeake Bay's terrapin populations and close the terrapin fishery once and for all.



Terrapin breathe air and often get trapped and drown in crab pots



A female terrapin digging her nest above the high-tide line (above) and a young terrapin.

With age females can grow to reach 9", males 4"



Things you can do to help:

- 1) Sign The Terrapin Petition!
- 2) Contact Governor Ehrlich and your Delegates and Senators and let them know that you care about terrapins.*
- 3) Stay informed and add your email address to the back of the signature page to receive terrapin updates.
- 4) If you're out in a boat, collect abandoned "ghost" crab pots & bring them to shore for disposal.
- 5) If you see a turtle moving across the road, **make sure it's safe first** and then move it across in the direction it was headed.
- 6) If you see a terrapin nesting, try not to disturb her but keep still & watch her from a distance.
- 7) Learn more about terrapins and why they are an important part of the Chesapeake Bay.
- 8) **Share what you know and love about terrapins with others. This might be the most important thing you can do to save our terrapins!**

*For more information & easy ways to contact your representatives, please visit The Chesapeake Terrapin Alliance's web site:

www.cterrapin.org

PETITION TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR A REGULATION TO CLOSE THE DIAMONDBACK TERRAPIN FISHERY

We, the undersigned, request that the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Service close the commercial fishery and eliminate the take and trade of diamondback terrapins in the State of Maryland. We believe that this is a prudent and necessary management action because:

- 1) life history characteristics including late age at maturity, low reproductive rates, and need for high adult survivorship, indicate that the harvest of terrapins and species with similar life history characteristics is unsustainable; indeed, these populations have crashed once before.
- 2) research on terrapins within the Chesapeake Bay and throughout their range indicate that populations are localized and a concentrated effort to catch terrapins directly or as bycatch in another fishery could rapidly decimate local populations.
- 3) statewide populations are unknown and thus no estimates are available to establish reliable quotas or harvest targets.
- 4) reporting and accounting methods are not consistent or accurate to determine the pressure and take of the current fishery.
- 5) the 2001 Maryland Diamondback Terrapin Task Force's first recommendation for terrapin conservation and management was to institute a moratorium on the commercial harvest.

As voters in the State of Maryland, we value our State reptile and mascot as an aesthetic treasure of the Chesapeake Bay, not as a resource to be shipped to Asian food markets both here and overseas for consumption. This petition may be used to approach the Maryland General Assembly to obtain closure of the terrapin fishery through legislative process.

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Sponsors: Chesapeake Terrapin Alliance and Mid-Atlantic Turtle & Tortoise Society

Collected by: _____

Please send original signature page to: Chesapeake Terrapin Alliance, 20023 Bollinger Road, Manchester, Maryland 21102, or contact us by visiting www.cterrapin.org