

Survey: Chesapeake's crab population at lowest since 1990

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The number of blue crabs in the Chesapeake Bay is estimated to be at the lowest level observed since an annual survey tracking the population began in 1990, officials announced Thursday.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources' annual winter dredge survey, a cooperative effort with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, estimated that 227 million [crabs](#) are living in the nation's largest estuary, down from 282 million in 2021. The survey's highest estimate for crabs in the bay was 852 million in 1993.

While the survey's juvenile crab estimate rose to 101 million from 86 million last year, officials noted that the number is below average for the third year.

The abundance of adult crabs has steadily declined despite meeting management objectives, officials said. The department said it will work with Virginia and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission on management measures for the 2022 crabbing season that address conservation needs.

The results "continue a worrying trend," Chesapeake Bay Foundation Senior Regional Ecosystem Scientist Chris Moore said in a statement.

"Fisheries regulators and scientists must work quickly to identify the key ecosystem factors influencing blue crab recruitment and survival so that they can be mitigated to ensure a healthy blue crab population in the

future," Moore said.

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