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NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 1, 2005

### BAY FISHERIES STEERING COMMITTEE RELEASES BLUE CRAB ASSESSMENT

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, working in concert with the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Steering Committee, has released the *Stock Assessment of the Blue Crab in the Chesapeake Bay 2005*. The *Stock Assessment* concludes that the Chesapeake Bay blue crab, although at a low level of abundance, is neither overfished nor currently experiencing overfishing. The full report is available at [www.hjort.cbl.umces.edu/crabs/Assessment05.html](http://www.hjort.cbl.umces.edu/crabs/Assessment05.html).

“The information in the Stock Assessment will play a key role in the Fisheries Steering Committee’s work with Bay resource managers to set blue crab management guidelines for coming years,” said Derek Orner, fisheries biologist with NOAA’s Chesapeake Bay Office and chair of the Chesapeake Bay Fisheries Steering Committee. The Fisheries Steering Committee coordinates with Bay fisheries management agencies and provides a forum for information exchange and development of coordinated decisions.

A team of scientists from academia and regional management agencies, led by Dr. Thomas Miller of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, that included scientists from UMCES, the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources completed the in-depth look at how blue crabs—and the science that supports the study of blue crabs—are doing in the Chesapeake Bay.

“The 2005 stock assessment builds on recent research and new modeling techniques that were supported by NOAA’s Chesapeake Bay Office,” noted Dr. Miller.

Prior to release, the assessment underwent an independent peer review process coordinated by the Center for Independent Experts (CIE), a group affiliated with the University of Miami that provides independent peer reviews of science nationwide. Scientists from Australia and the United Kingdom participated in the assessment review process.

The CIE report concluded that “the 2005 assessment constitutes a major advance over the [previous] assessments. There is an impressive array of research projects focused on blue crab and Chesapeake Bay” that NOAA’s Chesapeake Bay Office has made possible through its competitive research program.

“This is a good reality check from scientists and experts outside the Bay watershed to make sure we’re looking at the situation objectively,” said Dr. William T. Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries Service.” The fisheries management community should feel confident with the level of science performed.”

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The Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee, a technical workgroup of the Fisheries Steering Committee, prepares annual Blue Crab Advisory Reports. Starting in 2006, these reports will be released in November when fishery independent surveys are completed and will be based on new methodologies that were peer reviewed in the *Stock Assessment* so that Bay jurisdictions will be able to make timely management decisions.

NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Office is in its second decade of providing science, service, and stewardship to advance NOAA's mission in the mid-Atlantic region.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office: <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net>

More information on blue crabs and research:

- [www.hjort.cbl.umces.edu/crabs/crabhome.html](http://www.hjort.cbl.umces.edu/crabs/crabhome.html)
- [www.fisheries.vims.edu/femap/fish%20pages/Blue%Crab.htm](http://www.fisheries.vims.edu/femap/fish%20pages/Blue%Crab.htm)
- [www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/education/crab/bluecrabfacts.html](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/education/crab/bluecrabfacts.html)

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