

April 20, 2025

Support for H.898 – An Act to end the taking of horseshoe crabs for bait.

Dear Chair Rausch, Chair Barber and Members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, write to express our strong support for House Bill H.898, legislation that would prohibit the taking of horseshoe crabs for use as bait in commercial fishing in Massachusetts.

[Why We Support H.898](#)

Restoring Coastal Biodiversity Horseshoe crabs play a foundational role in coastal ecosystems. Their eggs are a vital food source for local shorebirds, and migratory shorebirds such as the federally threatened Red Knot, as well as for numerous marine species of ecological and commercial importance. Horseshoe crabs are on the brink of functional extinction in Massachusetts. To restore biodiversity along our shores, we must take immediate action to significantly reduce unnecessary mortality—starting with ending their use as bait.

Too Valuable to Kill Horseshoe crab blood is used to produce Limulus Amebocyte Lysate (LAL), which tests the safety of injectable therapies and medical devices. To produce these tests, horseshoe crabs are harvested and bled, during their spawning season. Fortunately, Synthetic alternatives exist that do not use horseshoe crabs. These synthetic methods offer great benefits from reliability and effectiveness to supply chain security. Eli Lilly, for example, already uses the synthetic version for 80 percent of its endotoxin testing. As we await full transition by the pharmaceutical industry to synthetics, it is imperative to reduce preventable mortality, such as bait harvest that killed over 140,000 crabs last year in Massachusetts .

A Species in Crisis Massachusetts' horseshoe crab population is nearing collapse. Decades of ongoing harvest habitat loss, and climate stress have taken a severe toll. With a 12-year maturation period, recovery is nearly impossible under current pressures. Without reducing harvest pressures, this ancient species—and the ecosystem and industries that rely on it—may not recover.

This Bill Strikes a Balance H.898 does not restrict biomedical use. Instead, it targets the outdated and unsustainable practice of harvesting horseshoe crabs for low-value bait. By ending bait harvest, the bill protects an ecologically and medically critical species while supporting the long-term health of fisheries and coastal biodiversity.

Environmental and Scientific Consensus H.898 is backed by scientists, conservation organizations, concerned citizens, and those who fondly remember when horseshoe crabs once swarmed the beaches of Massachusetts. Similar policies have been successfully implemented in other states, such as New Jersey and Connecticut.

By passing H.898, Massachusetts has an opportunity to lead with science, protect a species vital to both ecosystems and human health, and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

[Move H.898 Out of Committee](#)

We urge the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources to advance H.898 out of Committee without delay. This legislation is critical to safeguarding Massachusetts' rapidly declining horseshoe crab population and securing the long-term health and sustainability of our coastal ecosystems. The undersigned organizations, scientists, conservationists, and concerned citizens stand united in strong support of this bill and its timely passage.

Respectfully signed by the following organizations and individuals: