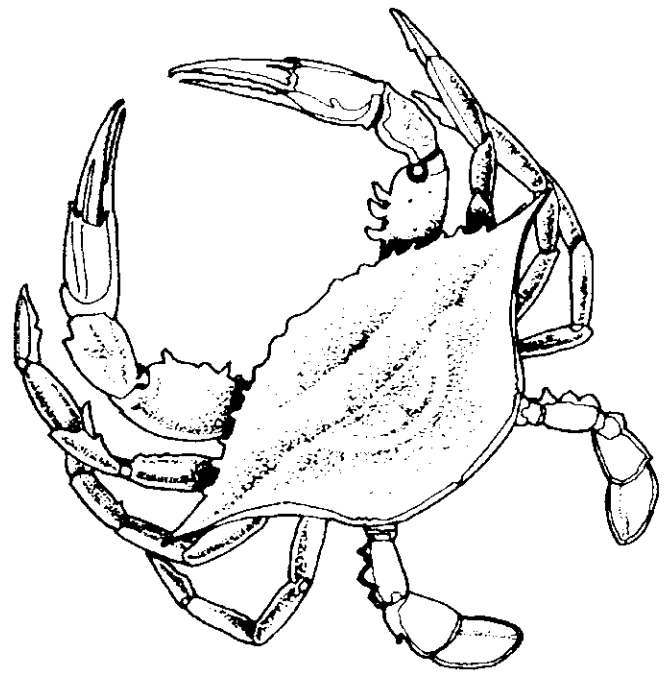


Blue Crabs: The Last Great Catch

The Chesapeake Bay still produces about half of the nation's blue crab harvest. They are the last great catch in the bay. As fish and oysters become scarcer, the demand for crabs grows. Watermen can sell just about as many as they can pull out of the water.

Blue crabs are real survivors. They are scavengers who eat almost anything they can find. In spite of pollution, changes in temperature, and more salt in the water, the blue crabs live on.

But even the blue crab is showing signs of trouble. As the grass beds disappear, crabs are losing their safest hiding place. (To avoid being eaten during molting, for example, crabs need to hide in the grass while their shells harden.) And as the oyster beds disappear, young crabs are losing their winter homes.



Blue crabs are the last great catch in the bay.

Searching for Solutions

If the animals in your ecocolumns had been threatened by pollution, the solution would have been simple: move them to a safe place. In the real world of the Chesapeake Bay, the problems are much more complex. And the solutions are, too.

Everyone agrees that the Chesapeake Bay has many problems, most of them human-made. But depending on where they live and what they do, people who live, work, and play in the Chesapeake Bay watershed area see these problems from very different points of view. And what seems like a solution to one group may seem like a problem to another group.

Let's look at the bay's problems from several different points of view. Then let's see if we can come up with some solutions. We all know that solving problems requires making compromises. That means we often need to give up one thing to receive another. This is called a **trade-off**. Both groups work together to do what is best. Depending on your point of view, you will find some solutions and trade-offs more difficult to live with than others. Each group will need to decide how it can best help the bay without giving up too much.