

**VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION**  
**“PERTAINING TO THE TAGGING OF SHELLFISH”**  
**CHAPTER 4 VAC 20-1250-10 ET SEQ.**

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**PREAMBLE**

This chapter establishes a method of identifying, with the use of shellfish tags, any harvest of shellfish from Virginia waters. This chapter is promulgated pursuant to the authority contained in §§28.2-201 and 28.2-801 of the Code of Virginia. This chapter amends and re-adopts, as amended, previous chapter 4 VAC 20-1250-10 et seq., which was adopted on ~~April 26, 2011~~ May 22, 2012 and made effective on ~~May 1, 2011~~ May 31, 2012. The effective date of this chapter is ~~May 31, 2012~~ October 1, 2021.

**4 VAC 20-1250-10. Purpose.**

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a method of identifying harvested shellfish, according to its original Virginia harvest area, at any time of the year.

**4 VAC 20-1250-20. Definitions.**

The following words and terms when used in this chapter shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Bulk shellfish tag” means a shellfish tag that shall only be used for shellfish harvested from a single harvest area in any one day and accompanies a conveyance containing multiple containers of shellfish.

“Certified dealer” means a person to whom certification is issued by the Virginia Department of Health for the purposes of introducing shellfish into commerce.

“Certified dealer tag” means a shellfish tag, which is approved by the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Shellfish Sanitation, that shall only be used for shellfish harvested from a single harvest area, in any one day, and those shellfish are either loose in a conveyance or in a single container.

"Container" means any bag, box, sack, tote, or other receptacle that contains shellfish to be held, in any type of conveyance, for transport from the harvest area to the landing site and from the landing site to the point of sale or other use.

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“Conveyance” means any form of transport, either mechanical, such as a boat or truck, or non-mechanical that is used to transport shellfish from the harvest area to the landing site or from the landing site to a certified dealer or other use.

“Direct marketing” means any shellfish or shellstock that is landed and sold without any post-harvest processing.

"Harvest" means the act of removing any shellfish or shellstock from a designated harvest area and placing that shellfish or shellstock in a container or on or in a conveyance.

“Land” or “landing” means to (i) enter port with finfish, shellfish, crustaceans, or other marine seafood on board any boat or vessel; (ii) begin offloading finfish, shellfish, crustaceans, or other marine seafood; or (iii) offload finfish, shellfish, crustaceans, or other marine seafood.

~~"Oysters" mean those oysters 2 1/2 inches or greater in shell length.~~

“Replant” or “Replanting” means to place, after harvest, shellfish into waters as allowable by applicable law or permit.

“Restricted-use shellstock” means shellstock or shellfish harvested from approved shellfish growing areas that shall not be sold for direct marketing or raw consumption.

“Restricted-use shellstock tag” means a Virginia Marine Resources Commission-issued green tag that shall only be used by a certified dealer who has a current certificate of inspection as a shucker packer for shellstock or shellfish harvested from a single harvest area in any one day. Use of any such tag indicates that shellstock is intended for further processing prior to distribution to retail or food service.

"Shellfish" or “shellstock” means all species of bivalve molluscan shellfish.

“Single harvest area” means one of the water areas established by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission for reporting fisheries statistics.

“Shellfish harvester tag” means a shellfish tag that shall only be used for shellfish harvested from a single harvest area, in any one day, and those shellfish are either loose in a conveyance or in a single container.

“Shucker packer” means a person who shucks and packs shellfish under a certificate of inspection issued by the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Shellfish Sanitation.

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“Temperature control” means the use of ice or mechanical refrigeration, which is capable of lowering the temperature of the shellstock and maintaining it at 50°F (10°C) or less, as approved by the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Shellfish Sanitation.

**4 VAC 20-1250-30. Shellfish identification.**

A. Any person harvesting shellfish for commercial purposes shall affix a shellfish harvester tag to each container of shellfish, except as provided in subsection E of this section, before leaving any single harvest area. The shellfish harvester tag shall remain in place while the shellfish are transported from the harvest area to the landing site and from the landing site to a certified dealer or for any other use. Any transport of shellfish to a certified dealer requires that the shellfish harvester tag remain affixed to each container of shellfish until the container is emptied or shipped and re-tagged by a certified dealer.

B. The shellfish harvester tag, the bulk shellfish tag, and the green restricted-use shellstock tag shall be durable, waterproof, approved by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission or the Virginia Department of Health prior to use, and at least 13.8 square inches in size.

C. The shellfish harvester tag shall contain all of the following indelible and legible information, in the following order:

1. The harvester's Virginia Marine Resources Commission identification number or Virginia Marine Resources Commission oyster aquaculture harvester permit number or clam aquaculture harvester permit number;
2. The date of harvest, time that any shellfish harvest began, and time that harvested shellfish were offloaded and placed under temperature control;
3. An acknowledgement of whether or not those shellfish, described in subdivision 2 of this subsection, were placed in a Virginia Department of Health, Division of Shellfish Sanitation-approved storage container with a layer of ice that continuously and completely covered the ~~oysters~~ shellfish;
4. The most accurate identification of the harvest location or aquaculture site, including the abbreviated name of the state of harvest and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's designation of the growing area by indexing, administrative, or geographic designation, and the minimum identification requirement shall be to specify a single harvest area from the listing, as described in 4VAC20-1250-50;

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5. The type and quantity of harvested shellfish; and,
6. The following statement, in bold capitalized letters: "THIS TAG IS REQUIRED TO BE ATTACHED, UNTIL THE CONTAINER IS EMPTY OR IS RE-TAGGED, AND THEREAFTER KEPT ON FILE FOR 90 DAYS."

D. For any quantities of shellfish commercially harvested from a single harvest area, in any one day, that are loose and not containerized aboard any conveyance, the harvester shall prepare a shellfish harvester tag for that quantity of shellfish, which shall accompany that quantity of shellfish during transport from the single harvest area to the landing site and from the landing site to a certified dealer, or for ~~any other use~~ transport to any area for replanting.

E. When multiple containers of shellfish are harvested from a single harvest area, in any one day, and placed in any conveyance, the lot may be tagged with a bulk shellfish tag, for that quantity of shellfish, which shall accompany that quantity of shellfish during transport from the harvest area to the landing site and from the landing site to a certified dealer, or for ~~any other use~~ transport to any area for replanting. In addition to the information required in subsection C of this section, any bulk shellfish tag shall also include:

1. The following statement in bold capitalized letters: "ALL SHELLFISH CONTAINERS IN THIS LOT HAVE THE SAME HARVEST DATE AND ARE FROM A SINGLE AREA OF HARVEST"; and,
2. The number of individual containers in the lot.

F. Certified shucker packers shall use a green restricted-use shellstock tag for the harvest of restricted-use shellstock from a single harvest area in any one day. The restricted-use shellstock tag shall accompany that quantity of shellfish during transport from the harvest area to the landing site and from the landing site to the certified shucker packer. In addition to the information required in subsection C of this section, any restricted-use shellstock tag shall also include:

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- 1) The certified shucker packer name and address; the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Shellfish and Sanitation certification number; and the following statement in bold capitalized letters: “FOR SHUCKING BY A CERTIFIED DEALER OR POST HARVEST PROCESSING ONLY”; and,
- 2) The quantity of restricted-use shellstock in the lot.

G. Certified dealers may use their certified dealer tag in place of a shellfish harvester tag as provided in subsection A of this section, except as provided in subsection F of this section.

H. All commercially harvested shellfish shall be tagged by a certified dealer prior to being sold, marketed, consumed or transported to any location other than to a certified dealer or for replanting.

**4 VAC 20-1250-40. Penalty.**

A. In addition to the penalty prescribed by law, any person violating any provision of this chapter shall destroy, in the presence of a marine police officer, all shellfish in his possession, or, at the direction of the marine police officer, shall place the shellfish overboard on the nearest oyster sanctuary or closed shellfish area and shall cease harvesting on that day. All harvesting apparatus may be subject to seizure, and, pursuant to § 28.2-232 of the Code of Virginia, all licenses and permits may be subject to revocation, following a hearing before the Virginia Marine Resources Commission.

B. As set forth in § 28.2-903 of the Code of Virginia, any person violating any provision of this chapter shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor, and a second or subsequent violation of any provision of this chapter committed by the same person, within 12 months of a prior violation, is a Class 1 misdemeanor.

**4 VAC 20-1250-50. Designated Single Harvest Areas.**

**A listing of water area names for use by harvesters to designate harvest areas.**

Back Bay  
 Back River  
 Bogue Bay  
 Bradford Bay

Mobjack Bay  
 Nansemond River  
 Nomini River  
 North River

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- Burton’s Bay
- Chesapeake Bay Lower East
- Chesapeake Bay Lower West
- Chesapeake Bay Upper East
- Chesapeake Bay Upper West
- Chickahominy River
- Chincoteague Bay
- Chuckatuck Creek
- Coan River
- Cobb Bay Seaside Eastern Shore
- Corrotoman River
- Currioman River
- East River
- Elizabeth River
- Fleets Bay
- Gargathy Bay
- Great Wicomico River
- Hog Island Bay
- Horn Harbor
- James River Middle
- James River Lower
- James River Upper
- Kegotank Bay
- Lafayette River
- Little Wicomico River
- Lower Machodoc Creek
- Lynnhaven Bay
- Magothy Bay
- Mattaponi River
- Mattox Creek
- Metomkin Bay
- Milford Haven
- North Landing River
- Outlet Bay
- Oyster Bay Seaside Eastern Shore
- Pagan River
- Pamunkey River
- Piankatank River
- Pocomoke River
- Pocomoke Sound
- Poquoson River
- Potomac Creek
- Rappahannock River Middle
- Rappahannock River Lower
- Rappahannock River Upper
- Rosier Creek
- Severn Creek
- South Bay
- Swash Bay
- Tangier Sound
- Upper Machodoc Creek
- Upshur Bay
- Ware River
- Warwick River
- Watts Bay
- Willoughby Bay
- Winter Harbor
- Yeocomico River
- York River Middle
- York River Lower
- York River Upper
- Ocean Eastern Shore
- Ocean Virginia Beach

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This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate copy of the chapter passed by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, pursuant to authority vested in the Commission by §§ 28.2-201

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and 28.2-801 of the Code of Virginia, duly advertised according to statute, and recorded in the Commission’s minute book, at its meeting held in Hampton, Virginia on August 24, 2021.

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Steven G. Bowman**  
**Commissioner**

Subscribed and sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of August 2021.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

