

VMRC INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMENT GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) encourages active conversation on Agency's Facebook Page. **Comments that do any of the following should be avoided:**

- Attacks or defames a person or group;
- Includes profane, obscene or vulgar language;
- Includes or links to spam or malware;
- Includes hate speech, including but not limited to comments that promote, foster or perpetuate discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, genetics, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or intellectual disability or sexual orientation;
- Are obscene or includes or links to sexual content;
- Promote or advertise a person, business or commercial transaction;
- Promote or oppose any person campaigning for election to political office or promote or oppose any ballot measure;
- Infringe on copyrights, trademarks, or other intellectual property, or contribute to such infringement;
- Compromise the safety, security, or proceedings of public systems or any criminal or civil investigations;
- Disclose personally identifiable medical information or any other personal information protected by law;
- Incite illegal activity
- ***Report suspected criminal activity. To report fisheries violations please contact the Virginia Marine Police dispatch Center at 1-800-541-4646.***

VMRC respects free speech, and VMRC will remove comments or take other appropriate action only to the extent permitted by law and where it appears necessary and proper to do so.

VMRC's social media sites may be provided through private companies, such as Facebook. Users of websites of private companies are subject to those companies' terms of service and acceptable use policies. Those companies are not bound by the First Amendment, and they may take action independently and under different standards than those applied by VMRC. Repeated violations may result in a commenter being blocked from the social media site.

Comments posted to VMRC's Facebook page and other social media sites represent the opinions of the individuals providing the comment and not the views, positions, or policies of VMRC, the Commonwealth of Virginia, or its employees or officials.

Defamation (libel and slander) and other laws apply online, and improper comments may lead to liability. Anyone who posts comments does so at their own risk, taking personal responsibility for their comments and any information provided.

To protect your privacy and the privacy of others, please do not include physical addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, or other personal information in the body of your comment.

Any references to commercial entities, products, services or other non-governmental organizations or individuals are not an official or personal endorsement and may not be quoted or reproduced for the purpose of stating or implying VMRC endorsement or approval.

Comments made on VMRC's social media sites may be considered public records and are subject to state and federal laws, including the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (*Code of Virginia § 2.2-3700 - § 2.2-3714*) and the Virginia Public Records Act (*Code of Virginia, § 42.1-76–§ 42.1-91*).

Posts on the VMRC Facebook page will not be considered by the VMRC when it makes decisions on proposed regulations, applications for permits, applications for leases, or any other matter. Any interested person who wishes to be heard on a proposed agency action should either submit a comment to the address listed in the notice of the proposed action or attend the public hearing at the time and place designated in the notice.

If you have questions or concerns about any content posted on the VMRC Facebook page, please contact the Page Administrator by e-mail at social.media@mrc.virginia.gov