



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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The Summer is Here. Did you Remember to Register with the Va. Fisherman Identification Program? *~ New, free registration benefits anglers and sustainable fishing ~*

NEWPORT NEWS, VA. – With the summer fishing season ramping up, state officials are reminding saltwater anglers to register with the Virginia Fisherman Identification Program if they are required to do so.

The new program went into effect on Jan. 1, and requires everyone who fishes in Virginia's saltwaters, or for saltwater species in tidal freshwater, to register with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission if they are exempt from buying a saltwater fishing license. Registration is quick, easy and free.

Anglers who buy a Virginia saltwater fishing license of any type are automatically registered.

So far, only 21,000 anglers have registered this year. The National Marine Fisheries Service estimates 750,000 people a year fish in Virginia's saltwaters.

“It is apparent that many anglers are not aware they are required to register if they are fishing without having to buy a saltwater fishing license,” said VMRC Fisheries Chief Jack Travelstead. “We urge people to become aware of the law and to register before they go fishing this year. It's easy and it's free.”

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State law requires license-exempt anglers (those who are exempted by law from having to buy a saltwater license) to register with the new Virginia Fisherman Identification Program for free and supply their contact information before they fish every year.

Virginia anglers who must register each year with the Fisherman Identification Program include: Those who fish on a boat licensed to cover all anglers; from a commercial pier or private property; who are age 65 and older; and those who fish in tidal freshwater for anadromous species such as striped bass, shad or other marine species.

Anglers who register are issued a unique, counterfeit-proof identification number to keep with them while fishing to prove they have registered.

The intent is to create a Virginia-wide “phone book” of saltwater anglers. Fishery managers will know who is fishing if a fishing license is purchased, but have no way of knowing who is fishing if an angler doesn’t need to buy a license. Registering those license-exempt anglers is the only way to create a comprehensive Virginia “phone book” of saltwater anglers.

This “phone book” will be given to the National Marine Fisheries Service in order to improve recreational fishing effort surveys (which will benefit species management and sustainable fisheries) and to exempt anglers from having to sign up directly with the National Saltwater Angler Registry and pay an annual \$15 federal registration fee.

Virginia’s saltwater anglers should not sign up with the national registry or pay that federal registration fee. Virginia has been exempted from the national registry because the Virginia Marine Resources Commission created the free Virginia registration program.

Anglers may register annually in the Virginia Fisherman Identification Program by going to www.mrc.virginia.gov/FIP now or by calling toll-free 800-723-2728 at any time of the day, any day of the week.

Anglers with a valid Virginia saltwater fishing license, or a Potomac River Fisheries Sport Fishing License, do not have to register with the state FIP. Their contact information will be collected when they buy a license.

Anglers under the age of 16 also are exempt from registering. Also exempt from registration are paying customers of licensed charter boats or head boats.

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission manages Virginia’s saltwater fisheries, both recreational and commercial, and is based in Newport News, Va. The Fisherman Identification Program is authorized by state law, and annual registration of non-licensed saltwater anglers is required.