

2020 Recreational Reporting Fact Sheet

SUBJECT TO CHANGE, please call (757) 247-2200 with any questions

What's up with this mandatory reporting for recreational fishing?

All recreational anglers (private and for-hire) targeting or catching cobia or black sea bass (February only, see bottom) must be covered under corresponding species permits.

Who would need to physically have the permit?

The captain or operator of the vessel (whether private or for-hire) and every individual in the case of shore, pier, or kayak fishing. Guests on private boats and for-hire boats do not need a permit, and the captain must also report for their activity.

Can I get one permit for multiple species?

No, the permits are specific to a species. However, if you sign up for multiple species' permits at the same time, the "permits" will be printed on the same physical card/paper.

I am a charter captain and private angler. Do I need two permits for one species?

No, you only need one permit for each species. However, when you report your trips, you need to indicate whether you took a private or for-hire trip.

Where can I sign up?

These free permits can be obtained online or from a VMRC Licensing Agent. For a list of agents, please refer to the website below or call the VMRC at (757) 247-2200.

Sign up for your permit online: <https://webapps.mrc.virginia.gov/public/mpermits/index.php>

Visit a VMRC Licensing Agent: <https://mrc.virginia.gov/mrcagents.shtm>

What is a VMRC ID?

We assign a number specific to each person who is registered as a commercial fisherman or signs up for a recreational species permit. Most of the time, it will be of the format N0#####. It does not change from year to year, and is used to obtain all of your permits. It is different from the "permit number" and your DGIF Customer ID/CID or saltwater fishing license number.

What happens if I fish for one of these species without a permit?

If you are stopped by a law enforcement and this is the case, an officer can write you a ticket.

What happens if I go fishing on my friend's boat, and he doesn't have a permit?

It is the obligation of the captain or operator of the boat to be permitted. Allowing passengers on the vessel to obtain permits could create confusion over reporting if those anglers also fish on boats whose captains are permitted.

Do I have to report every trip, even if I don't catch anything?

Yes, trips where you don't catch your target species are important for management, as the number of such "unsuccessful" trips can hint at the health of a fish population.

Do I have to report if I was not targeting one of these species, but caught one?

Yes, these trips are also relevant for estimating recreational landings.

Do I have to file reports every week?

No, the "7-day" requirement means that, if you take a trip resulting in catch, it must be reported within 7 days. All of your zero-catch trips, or "no-activity" reports, must be in by 15 days after the end of the season. However, timely reports of zero-catch trips are welcome, too.

Can I report by calling into the VMRC?

No, there is no dedicated call-in system to report for any of these fisheries, nor does staff take specific trip reports.

How do I report?

You may meet your reporting requirements by utilizing the VA Saltwater Journal found at <https://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com>. The VA Saltwater Journal has a dedicated section for reporting for these mandatory species. You must also report your non-participation if you did not fish during their respective seasons. Alternatively, paper forms may be found on our website at <http://mrc.virginia.gov/forms/index.shtm> which will allow you to mail in your reports. Please call if you need one mailed to you. We cannot accept reports sent by email.

What if I can't log in to the VA Saltwater Journal to report?

If you have never used the VA Saltwater Journal before, you will need to register by clicking the "Register Here" button at the top of the page. If you have previously registered but cannot remember your password, please click the "Forgot Password" button. The VA Saltwater Journal only allows one user per email address. However, a registered VA Saltwater Journal user can report for another permit holder in the Journal by entering their VMRC ID. If you continue to have trouble, you may call the VMRC or use the paper form to mail in the report.

Why should I be reporting this information for cobia?

There are not a lot of cobia data being collected annually. All commercial landings are being reported while recreational landings are estimated by NOAA's Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). MRIP is a survey whose sampling effort is not robust enough to accurately estimate cobia landings. Providing your trip reports is valuable in supplementing the limited cobia data that are currently available. Virginia will attempt to incorporate this dataset into cobia stock assessments and management. Similar types of reporting by South Carolina charter boat captains were an important data component to the last cobia stock assessment. The data you report have the potential to be used in stock assessments and the setting of regulations, but this can only be achieved with widespread participation from anglers and captains.

I am participating in the winter black sea bass fishery. What do I need to do?

*NOTE: This is only for February 2020 and is strictly for data-gathering purposes. Similar to the other species with required permits, the captain or operator of the vessel will need to obtain a free permit to fish for black sea bass in February only. However, the reporting requirements are different from those for the other species. The permittee is responsible for contacting Law Enforcement Operations at 1-(800) 541-4646 before or immediately after the start of each fishing trip. The permittee shall provide the dispatcher with his name, VMRC ID, point of landing, description of your vessel, approximate time of arrival and a contact phone number. All trips must also be reported after the fact via the VA Saltwater Journal or on paper forms.