



New IVR Feature Available for VMS Users

NOAA Fisheries' Office of Law Enforcement Northeast Division and staff from the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) recently collaborated to create a new function for the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Call-In system. This feature is designed specifically for vessel owners who are required to report via the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) system.

Some vessel owner/operators are required by regulation to declare their activity for every trip through their VMS unit before leaving port. The new IVR feature enables owner/operators to select "Confirm the use of a previous VMS code" to fulfill their VMS activity declaration requirement.

In order to use this IVR feature and to receive a confirmation number, you must declare your trip using the last VMS activity code sent from your VMS unit that was received by NOAA Fisheries. If you intend to declare a different activity code for your trip or if the IVR is unable to confirm your code, you then must declare your trip through your VMS unit.

Here's what you need to know in order to take advantage of this new feature.

Before calling, have the following information ready:

Your IVR PIN number (same number as your Fish OnLine PIN)

Your vessel's six-digit federal permit number

Your eight-digit operator permit number

Your most recent VMS activity code (format xxx-xxx-xxxxxx)

Need your IVR PIN number? Call the GARFO Analysis & Program Support Division at 1-888-487-9994.

Procedure

Once you have your information pulled together, take the following steps.

Call the IVR system at 1-888-284-4904.

At "Main Menu," press 1 to "Report the start or end of a trip, declare a block, or confirm the use of a previous VMS code."

At "Fishing Activity Reporting," enter your vessel's six-digit permit number and your IVR PIN number.

When prompted, record your name and operator permit number and then press the # key.

When prompted, press 1 to confirm your name and operator number or press 2 to re-record the information.

When prompted, press 4 to "Confirm the use of a previous VMS code." At this point, the IVR will respond with one of the following two messages:

- "Your most recent VMS activity code is (xx)."

When prompted, press 1 to confirm the use of this code. The system will then provide you with a confirmation number, which you should record and keep with you on your trip. However, if this is *not* the code you will use, when prompted, hang up and declare your trip through your VMS unit. Or,

- "Your most recent VMS activity code cannot be confirmed." If you receive this message, when prompted, hang up and declare your trip through your VMS unit.

Important information

It's important to remember the following points.

This alternative method of declaring a trip prior to leaving port *cannot* be used to declare a trip if your VMS unit is not working. Your VMS unit must be fully functional. If your VMS is not working, please call the Northeast VMS Team for assistance (see contact information below).

All other VMS reporting requirements *still* apply.

The code reported back to you by the IVR system is the *most recent code sent* from your vessel's VMS unit and received by NOAA Fisheries.

- If the IVR system is unable to confirm your VMS activity code, it is likely for one of the following reasons: no code for your vessel could be retrieved; your last code was the power-down code (PWD-PWD-XXXXXX); your last code was a Southeast Region code (for dual-reporting vessels); or your last code was a code that could only be declared when seaward of the VMS Demarcation Line.

You will still receive an automated trip start and trip end message from NOAA Fisheries through your VMS unit. Your trip will be recorded in our monitoring system with the code confirmed by you through the IVR system.

The IVR back-up message line should *not* be used if you are unable to use the main IVR system.

For more information, call the Northeast VMS Team at (978) 281-9213 or e-mail the team at <NMFS.OLE.NE@noaa.gov>.

New Sector Exemptions For Fishing Year 2014

On April 28, NOAA Fisheries approved 17 sector operations plans for the May 1 start of the 2014 Northeast multispecies groundfish fishing year. We also allocated quota for 15 groundfish stocks to each sector and granted the sector vessels a number of exemptions.

For 2014, sectors are allocated 99% of the overall groundfish quota based on the landings history of the 845 permits enrolled in sectors.

Sectors are given universal exemptions from several groundfish regulations, such as most groundfish trip limits, restrictions from some Gulf of Maine Rolling Closure Areas, and a few others. Along with these universal exemptions, 17 previously approved exemptions were granted for 2014, including: exemptions from limits on the number of gillnets and hooks that may be fished in some areas; seasonal restrictions on special access programs; trawl gear requirements in the Eastern US/Canada Area; and additional exemptions that provide flexibility for sector operations.

In addition, we approved three new

exemptions for 2014.

The first enables a sector vessel to fish for Acadian redfish in a designated area within the Gulf of Maine using nets with codend mesh as small as 6" on any approved trawl gear.

For every trip that declares the exemption, at least 80% of the total groundfish landed must be Acadian redfish. And, for observed trips that declare the exemption, total groundfish discards, including redfish, may not exceed 5%. This exemption provides increased opportunities to target the abundant and healthy redfish stock.

The second exemption enables a sector vessel to access the eastern and western portions of the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area. Vessels can use gillnets, hooks, or trawl gear in both access areas.

However, gillnets must be 10" or larger in both areas and only specialized trawl gear may be used in the eastern area in order to reduce the catch of yellowtail flounder. This exemption provides increased opportunities to target monkfish, dogfish,

and skates, all of which are abundant.

The third exemption enables a sector vessel using trawl gear to catch small-mesh species after targeting groundfish. The vessel must fish with a regulated mesh codend during the first part of the trip, and then it may switch to a smaller codend for the second portion of the trip.

To do this, the vessel must make modifications to the trawl gear and fish within one of two areas in Southern New England. When fished properly, the gear modifications have been shown to reduce groundfish catch, and both areas have been shown to have minimal large-mesh groundfish species.

This exemption provides increased opportunities to land whiting, longfin squid, mackerel, herring, and other small-mesh species, provided that the vessel meets the requirements of those fisheries.

For more information, call Brett Alger, Sustainable Fisheries Division, at (978) 281-9153 or e-mail him at <brett.alger@noaa.gov>.

New Management Measures, Reporting Requirements for the Skate Fishery

NOAA Fisheries recently announced a proposed rule to implement Framework 2 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan. This framework, developed by the New England Fishery Management Council, updates catch limits and quotas for the skate fisheries for the 2014 and 2015 fishing years.

Largely due to declines in biomass of the major target species – winter and little skates – the total annual catch limit for all skates is proposed to be reduced by 30% to approximately 78 million pounds.

As a result, the quotas for the skate wing and bait fisheries would be reduced by about 24% each. The total quota for the skate wing fishery would be about 24 million pounds and, for the skate bait fishery, roughly 12 million pounds. However, skate possession limits for both fisheries are proposed to stay the same.

This action also proposes to modify skate reporting requirements for vessels and seafood dealers. Most significantly, the option to report “unclassified skate” will no longer be available on Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs) or in any dealer reporting systems.

Instead, vessels and dealers will be required to report all of the skate species that they catch, land, or purchase. This is necessary to improve species-specific data, which will help enhance stock assessments for skate species and allow for better monitoring and management of the fishery.

Under the proposed reporting changes, skate wing

landings would have to be identified as one of the following four species: winter skate, clearnose skate, thorny skate, or barndoor skate.

Whole skate bait landings would have to be identified as one of these eight species: little skate, winter skate, little/winter skate mix, clearnose skate, rosette skate, smooth skate, thorny skate, or barndoor skate.




The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) has developed a new skate identification guide to assist vessels and dealers with this reporting transition. The guide is now available on the GARFO website at <www.nero.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/skate>.

If you fish for or purchase skates, we strongly encourage you to become familiar with the species that are harvested or landed in your area. We also urge vessels operators, crews, and dealers to learn how to readily identify the three prohibited species – thorny, barndoor, and smooth skates – and to release them when caught.

NOAA’s Office of Law Enforcement and its state partners also will be using this new guide to help ensure compliance with the new reporting requirements and the prohibited species regulations. Our port agents are trained in skate identification and can provide assistance.

Visit <www.nero.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/skate> to view the proposed rule. For more information, call Tobey Curtis, Sustainable Fisheries Division, at (978) 281-9273 or e-mail him at <tobey.curtis@noaa.gov>.

NOAA FISHERIES Northeast Skate ID Guide

PROHIBITED SPECIES	PROHIBITED SPECIES	PROHIBITED SPECIES
<p>THORNY SKATE (<i>Amblyraja radiata</i>)</p>  <p><small>Prohibited throughout the NE Region VTR Code: SKTHOR (whole) SKTHORW (wings)</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Names: Mud Skate, Stary Skate • Range: Most common in the Gulf of Maine • Depth: Most common 40 - 165 fathoms • Max Length: 41 in (104 cm) <p><small>Features:</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large thorns along back and shoulders • Brown/Grayish body surface • Tail shorter than body • Underside of wings are white • No spots on wings 	<p>BARNDOOR SKATE (<i>Dipturus laevis</i>)</p>  <p><small>Prohibited throughout the NE Region VTR Code: SKBARN (whole) SKBARNW (wings)</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range: Most common on southern Georges Bank and southern New England • Depth: Most common 35-80 fathoms • Max Length: 60 in (152 cm) <p><small>Features:</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very pointed snout • Reddish brown body surface • Small dark spots covering body • No spines on wings • Underside of wings are gray 	<p>SMOOTH SKATE (<i>Malacoraja senta</i>)</p>  <p><small>Prohibited in the Gulf of Maine VTR Code: SKSM</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Names: Prickly Skate, Smooth Tailed Skate • Range: Most common in the Gulf of Maine • Depth: Most common 55-250 fathoms • Max Length: 26 in (64 cm) <p><small>Features:</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pointed snout • No hard spines on wings • Pale brown coloration • 2 rows of small spines along the tail

March 1, 2014 U.S. Department of Commerce | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration | NOAA Fisheries

Steps to Take if You Encounter a Sea Turtle Entangled in Fishing Gear

As water temperatures warm during the spring and summer, sea turtles move into Northeast US fishing grounds. From Virginia through Maine, you may encounter any of four common species of sea turtles – green, Kemp’s ridley, loggerhead, and leatherback. All sea turtles in US waters are protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Sea turtle populations have been reduced from historical numbers due to many causes, including hunting and egg harvesting, destruction of habitat, vessel strikes, and capture in fishing gear. In order to recover these species, it is important to reduce serious injury and mortality.

Sea turtles often are found in the same time and place as fishing gear and have been accidentally caught in a wide range of gears, including dredges, gillnets, hook-and-line gear, longlines, pots/traps, pound nets, trawls, and weirs.

Some of these interactions result in serious injury or death to the sea turtle. However, prompt and proper handling and resuscitation can reduce the risk to the animal and increase its chance of survival. All fishermen are responsible for the proper handling and resuscitation of sea turtles.

When a sea turtle becomes entangled in the vertical lines of pot gear, releasing it can be challenging and complicated. These entanglements often involve live,

injured animals, and line may be wrapped many times around multiple body parts.

Entangled turtles must be handled carefully so that disentanglement efforts cause no further injury. Also, all gear must be removed before release since even a small amount of gear can eventually lead to serious injury or death. Under certain conditions, expert help to disentangle the sea turtles may be available.

Report entanglements

Due to the complexity of these cases and the potential danger of handling large, powerful animals

If you encounter an entangled sea turtle or marine mammal, please contact the NMFS marine animal hotline immediately.

1-866-755-NOAA (6622)

– leatherbacks can weigh over 1,000 pounds – the dedicated, trained responders of the Sea Turtle Disentanglement Network are on call.

We ask you to report sea turtle entanglements immediately to our marine animal hotline at 1-866-755-NOAA (6622) and stand by the turtle at a safe distance until receiving further instruction. Network members respond quickly to ensure that the turtle is assessed, completely and safely disentangled, and, if necessary, provided with medical care.

In some cases, factors such as distance from shore or weather prohibit responders from reaching the entangled turtle in a timely manner. To prepare for these situations, fishermen participating in the Atlantic bluefish, American lobster, mackerel/squid/butterfish, monkfish, Northeast multispecies, Northeast skate complex, spiny dogfish, and summer flounder/scup/black sea bass fisheries are authorized to disentangle turtles from their gear.

In addition, these fishermen have received a placard describing sea turtle disentanglement techniques. However, it is still important to report entangled turtles to the marine animal hotline first. The network has specialized tools, training, and access to medical care that could mean the difference between life and death for an entangled turtle.

Fishermen are encouraged to download handling instructions and requirements from our website at <www.nero.noaa.gov/prot_res/stranding/SeaTurtleHandlingResuscitationv1.pdf>.

For more information, call Kate Sampson at (978) 282-8470 or e-mail her at <kate.sampson@noaa.gov>.

Q&A: New Lobster Limited Access Requirements, Trap Transfer Rules for Area 2, Outer Cape

NOAA Fisheries published a final rule on April 7 to implement a Limited Access Program in Lobster Management Area 2 and the Outer Cape Lobster Management Area.

This rule also establishes a lobster Trap Transfer Program that will enable Federal lobster permit holders with qualified trap allocations for Area 2, the Outer Cape Area, and Area 3 to buy and sell portions of their allocations up to an area-specific trap cap.

If you have a Federal lobster permit, you should have received information in the mail in May about your eligibility to fish in these areas, as well as instructions on how to apply and, if necessary, send us further documentation.

We implemented this rule to cap and control lobster trap fishing effort in Area 2 and the Outer Cape Area consistent with actions to control trap fishing effort in other lobster management areas.

The Trap Transfer Program is intended to allow Federal lobster permit holders to optimize the size of their lobster businesses by buying and selling portions of their trap allocations.

A Federal lobster permit holder who does not qualify for Area 2 or the Outer Cape Area or did not qualify for Area 3 under a previous program may gain access to these areas by purchasing part of the trap allocation from a qualified permit holder. Previously, the only way to gain access to an area was to purchase a Federal permit along with its entire trap allocation.

The following Q&A is intended to answer many of the questions lobstermen may have about the requirements.

Q: How do I apply?

A: In early May, we sent every Federal lobster permit holder a letter stating whether we have sufficient information to verify each permit's eligibility for Area 2, the Outer Cape Area, or both. We also sent an application form that summarizes our preliminary review of each permit's eligibility and trap allocation.

To apply, the Federal permit holder must complete and sign the application form and submit it, along with any necessary supporting documentation, to NOAA Fisheries at the address below. Applications must be postmarked no later than Nov. 3, 2014. The application letter and instructions included with each application packet provide further information on how to apply.

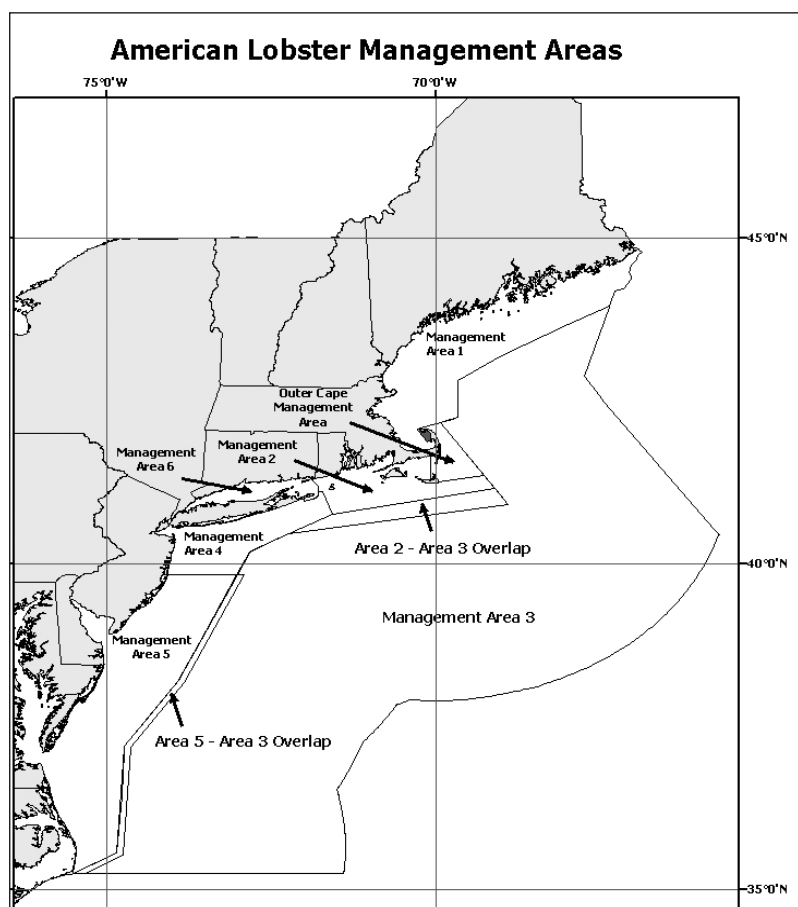
Q: What if I received a letter that says NOAA Fisheries has sufficient information to qualify my permit for Area 2 and/or the Outer Cape Area?

A: If the letter we sent you says that we already have the required documentation to show that your permit meets the qualification and allocation criteria, then you need only sign the application and send it back to us.

If you disagree with our preliminary allocation determination, check the appropriate box on the application and submit documentation to support your claim. The instruction guide included with your letter and application has more information on the types of required documentation.

Q: What if I received a letter that says NOAA Fisheries does *not* have sufficient information to qualify my permit for Area 2 and/or the Outer Cape Area?

A: If we do not have the documentation to determine your permit's eligibility and trap allocation and you believe your permit may qualify, send in your signed application form along with the documents



A: Every Federal lobster permit holder should have received an application packet. If you did not receive one and believe that your permit qualifies, call our Permit Office at (978) 282-8438.

Q: What are the eligibility criteria and what types of documents are needed?

A: We sent you an application instruction guide with details on the eligibility criteria and other important information. You can access the guide at www.nero.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/lobster. If you received a letter that says we have information on hand to show that your permit meets the eligibility requirements, you only need to submit the signed application form.

Q: Where do I send my application?

A: Mail your application to: Lobster Area Eligibility Program, NOAA Fisheries Permit Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930; or e-mail it to us at Permits.NE@noaa.gov.

to demonstrate that your permit meets the eligibility criteria as described in the instruction guide. The guide is included with the application packet and can be accessed from our website at www.nero.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/lobster.

Q: What if I have a Federal lobster permit but did not receive a letter or application packet?

Q: What is the application deadline?

A: The application deadline is Nov. 3, 2014, but we strongly encourage you to submit your Area 2 and Outer Cape Area applications by July 1, 2014 if you intend to participate in the Trap Transfer Program during 2014.

We will attempt to make eligibility decisions by
See LOBSTER AREA2, next page

GARFO Port Agents are Here to Help

NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office's (GARFO) port agents are based in the major fishing ports throughout the greater Atlantic area, which covers Maine through Virginia. These professionals are trained to provide a variety of services to the fishing industry.

In the area of general assistance with fishing regulations and other information, GARFO port agents can:

- Provide information on current commercial and recreational fishing openings and closures, including state rules and limits;
- Help you contact the appropriate GARFO or NOAA Fisheries staff for more information on a particular fishery or topic or to make data requests;
- Forward comments and suggestions back to other GARFO staff; and
- Respond to questions on GARFO activities and policies.

Port agents also can address questions related to specific programs. They can assist dealers with the SAFIS web form, bluefin data trip ticket, and file uploads and provide information about which market and other codes to use in reporting or about

the development of new codes as needed. They also can help with reporting compliance issues.

For fishermen, port agents are ready to lend a hand with: completing vessel trip reports; navigating Fish OnLine, including filing negative reports, reviewing data submitted by dealers, and other reporting compliance issues; and obtaining Letters of Authorization for some fisheries. Furthermore, they can provide you with vessel trip reports, instructions, and covers.

Port agents also can assist with permit issues. They can help dealers, vessel owners, and operators file initial applications, check current permit status, and answer questions about general permitting rules. In some cases, they can be a resource for figuring out state permit applications, too.

GARFO port agent offices are located in: Portland ME; Gloucester and New Bedford, MA; Point Judith RI; East Hampton, NY; Toms River and Cape May, NJ; and Hampton, VA.

Download a current listing of port agent staff, offices, and contact information at www.nero.noaa.gov/sed/portoff.pdf. Then, stop by a port agent office, make an appointment, or look for your local port agent on the dock.

Update on Federal Blue Crab Disaster Programs in the Chesapeake Bay

On Sept. 22, 2008, the Secretary of the US Department of Commerce declared that a commercial fishery failure had occurred in the Chesapeake Bay blue crab soft and peeler fisheries due to a 41% decline in landings bay-wide.

Subsequently, on Nov. 18, 2008, NOAA Fisheries announced that Maryland and Virginia would be eligible for financial assistance to help watermen who had been economically hurt by this commercial fishery failure.

In Maryland, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources is responsible for managing the state's blue crab resources. In Virginia, the responsible agency is the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. Each state was awarded \$14,995,000 in disaster relief funds to be administered in the form of Federal grants, and each was asked to develop a plan to address the impacts of this commercial fishery failure.

These plans have evolved over the last five years and are summarized in this two part series. In this installment, we'll look at Virginia's projects.

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission began the implementation of six projects beginning with the Derelict Crab Pot and Marine Debris Removal Project in December 2008. The remaining projects were launched in 2009. Of the six projects, five are now completed and one is continuing into 2014. The projects are detailed as follows.

- **Derelict Blue Crab Pot and Marine Debris Removal** – This project involved removing marine debris from Virginia's tidal waters with the assistance of watermen, resulting in the recovery of more than 32,000 crab pots over four winters from 2008 through 2012.

Removed debris included such things as tires, gillnets, appliances, and crab pots. Derelict crab pots can remain in the environment for years, continuing to capture and kill fish, shellfish, birds, and marine mammals, including endangered or threatened species.

About 20% of the crab pots deployed each season are lost. Each functional derelict crab pot can continue to capture about a bushel of market-sized crabs per season, a substantial economic loss to the fishery.

- **Cull Ring and Terrapin Excluder Device Project** – The goals of this study were to employ Virginia's watermen to investigate the effects of different crab pot cull-ring sizes on blue crab catch, biomass, and survival, and to determine the effects of bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) in crab pots on blue crab catch, finfish bycatch, and diamondback terrapin bycatch.

A BRD is modified fishing gear used by watermen to allow the escape of unwanted species, juvenile target species, or endangered species. These BRD-configured pots are now approved for use in the recreational crab fishery.

- **Supplemental Funding for the Fishery Resource Grant Program** – As part of activities to restore the Chesapeake Bay blue crab population, the commonwealth instituted several new restrictions on blue crab harvests beginning in 2008.

These new regulations affected the livelihoods of Virginia's blue crab harvesters. To supplement the income of these affected watermen and support their financial stability, the commonwealth proposed

training harvesters in oyster aquaculture.

Federal funds were used to hire a full-time advisory service person to support blue crab harvesters in their new ventures into oyster aquaculture. Two different methods of oyster aquaculture were promoted – cultch-less and remote setting. Participants surveyed to date indicated a strong willingness to continue developing their shellfish aquaculture enterprises.

- **Oyster Aquaculture** – In 2010, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's Conservation and Replenishment Department began training crab industry participants in modern techniques for growing oysters on private grounds. These techniques are easily adaptable to the boats and equipment available to crab harvesters and, hopefully, will provide alternative sources of income for harvesters active in the blue crab fishery.

More than 130 watermen were trained in cage aquaculture in 2010 and 2011, and all individuals have since harvested their first crop of oysters. Many participants purchased additional oyster seed and equipment to continue growing oysters after completing their training projects.

From 2010 through 2012, another 90 blue crab industry participants were trained in spat-on-shell oyster production. They, too, have begun harvesting their oysters.

With the spat-on-shell method, oyster larvae are set on shells in large tanks to produce oyster seed in a manner very similar to what happens with wild oyster seed.

As an alternative to the spat-on-shell method, oysters also can be cultivated loose on the bottom of the estuary. This approach is less labor-intensive and produces oysters primarily targeted for the shucking industry, while spat-on-shell oysters are sold to the higher-end, raw bar trade.

All of the training projects cultivate selectively bred, disease-tolerant, triploid (reproductively sterile) oysters, which are highly marketable year-round because of their superior meat quality.

In 2013, additional blue crab watermen participated in the oyster aquaculture training program, with more than 20 individuals enrolling in the spat-on-shell program.

In total, 23,715 bushels of shells were set with 738 million eyed-larvae produced by Virginia hatcheries.

Lobster Area 2

Continued from previous page

Sept. 1 for those applications received by July 1. You won't be able to transfer traps until we make a final determination on your area eligibility and trap allocation.

Q: When can I transfer traps?

A: We hope to begin to allow permit holders to transfer traps later in the 2014 calendar year with those transfers taking effect on May 1, 2015. We will notify Federal lobster permit holders in the coming months about when traps may be transferred and the process for transferring traps.

Q: Which traps are transferable?

These shells then were deployed with 160 million small oysters on private oyster beds throughout Virginia's Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

This year was the most productive for the project to date. The program not only has stimulated the growth of private oyster hatcheries in Virginia, it has seen the harvest of oysters from private oyster grounds increase significantly, giving much needed stability to this fledgling industry.

- **Crab Pot and Peeler Pot License Buy-Out Program** – This program was initiated and completed in 2009. Its aim was to reduce overcapacity in the crab pot and peeler pot fisheries. In total, 75,441 crab pots or peeler pots and 359 crab licenses were purchased and removed from the fisheries. Despite the success of this project, however, overcapacity remains an issue in Virginia's crab fisheries.

- **Update of the Blue Crab Stock Assessment** – In 2013, the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee (CBSAC) completed its report on the status of the Chesapeake's blue crab stock, supported in part with Federal Blue Crab Disaster funding. The Chesapeake Bay Program Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team's executive committee endorsed the CBSAC's findings.

This executive committee includes representatives from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Chesapeake Bay Office, Maryland Sea Grant, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the District of Columbia's Division of Fish and Wildlife.

Managers and scientists expect annual estimates of blue crab abundance and exploitation rates to vary. However, if at any time Bay-wide Winter Dredge Survey results indicate that the abundance of female, spawning-age crabs has fallen below the overfished level of 70 million, management measures will be implemented to protect the blue crab stock.

In 2013, the abundance of female, spawning-age crabs resident in the Chesapeake Bay was approximately 147 million. This number is below the recommended goal of 215 million but remains above the 70 million target.

These projects will be complete this year and approved final reports will be available to fishermen and the general public on our website at <www.nero.noaa.gov/StateFedOff/grantfactsheets>.

For more information, call Deirdre Kimball, NOAA Fisheries, at (978) 281-9290 or e-mail her at <Deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov>.

A: Only Area 2, Outer Cape Area, and Area 3 traps are transferable, but they may be purchased by anyone with a Federal lobster permit.

So, even if your permit does not initially qualify for these areas, you may gain access to these areas by purchasing a partial allocation from a qualified permit holder. In the next few months, we will provide more information on the trap transfer process.

Q: How can I get more information?

A: The final rule and application instructions are available on our website at <www.nero.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/lobster>. You also can call the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315.

