



# The Virginia Saltwater Review

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by

**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

## OVERVIEW



As the 4<sup>th</sup> of July quickly approaches, we want to wish all of our readers a happy Independence Day. Always remember the men and women of our military and the sacrifices they make every day for our freedom.



The fishing report this week has a little bit of everything in it, from cobia, flounder, and spadefish to king mackerel, tuna, and marlin! Now that the heat index has dropped to below 100 degrees, it is a great time to get out and enjoy Virginia’s bountiful fisheries.

If you were on the water last week, you most likely saw a fishing tournament team in your travels. Among the 39 fishing teams in the Wallace’s Bait and Tackle Cobia Tournament (see the Wallace’s report on page 2) and the 97 fishing teams in the Flounder Bowl out of Dare Marina (see Ken Neill’s report on page 3), there was plenty of fishing action last Saturday. Pictured above is the ‘Reel Women’ Fishing Team from the Wallace’s Bait and Tackle Cobia Tournament.

As always, there will be an extraordinary amount of boating traffic this weekend due to the multitude of fireworks displays that can be seen directly from the water in the Hampton Roads region, so be mindful of each other on the water and at the boat ramps. And now, on to the fishing report!

## THE FISHING REPORT

National Saltwater Angler Registry **Register 2010**

**New Federal Law Affecting Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishermen**

*Bait Tackle Register*

**WHAT? National Saltwater Angler Registry.**

**WHEN?** Most saltwater fishermen must register before they go fishing this year.

**WHO MUST REGISTER?** Virginia anglers who fish in federal waters, or target or catch anadromous species (saltwater fish that spawn in freshwater) like striped bass, shad or river herring.

**WHO IS EXEMPT?** Anglers who are under 16; only fish on federally licensed charter, party or guide boats; hold a Highly Migratory Species Angling permit; are fishing commercially under a valid license; or are already registered through an exempted state.

**HOW DO I REGISTER?** Go online at [www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov) or call 888-MRIP-411. You can register and fish the same day and registration is FREE in 2010.

**WHY REGISTER?** Registration is the law. It is also an important new tool for NOAA and anglers to help ensure the long-term sustainability of saltwater fishing.



**LEARN MORE**  
[www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov) | 1-888-MRIP-411

### Chincoteague

Captain Bob's saw keeper ratios of 25-to-1 for flounder with Queens Sound being the angler's choice. Kingfish are being reported around the inlets of seaside bays, along with some croaker. Several sharks are being caught as well.

### Wachapreague

Last weekend was a great fishing weekend, according to staff at the Wachapreague Marina. Bluefin tuna, yellowfin tuna, white marlin, cobia, king mackerel—the kitchen sink were hooked! A 161-pound dusky shark was weighed in last week as well. All the usual locations were productive, including the 26-Mile Hill, Norfolk and Washington Canyons, and the Lumpy Bottom. During the week, fishing has slacked off somewhat. Flounder are still holding as well. Even though number of larger fish has diminished, there are still some keeper flounder to be had in the area.

National Saltwater Angler Registry **Register 2010**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**How does the Registry relate to Virginia's Fisherman Identification Program?**  
In 2011, Virginia will implement its own free saltwater registration program. The Virginia Fisherman Identification Program will collect the information necessary to exempt saltwater anglers from having to register annually with the federal government and pay any future federal registration charges. The free, annual state registration will be in place by Jan. 1, 2011. **UNTIL THEN, NON-EXEMPT VIRGINIA SALTWATER FISHERMEN MUST REGISTER AT COUNTMYFISH.NOAA.GOV OR 888-MRIP411.**

**Does the Registry impact other regulations, like fishing for stripers in the EEZ?**  
No. The registration requirement is in addition to, and has no bearing on, existing or future fishery management regulations such as size and bag limits, closed seasons and areas, or saltwater fishing license purchase requirements. For example, no person, whether or not registered by NOAA, is permitted to harvest or possess striped bass in the US EEZ.

**What is the purpose of the Registry?**  
The Registry is a tool that will help NOAA better estimate the health of fish stocks, and to check that protections put in place to preserve fisheries will be fair, effective, and based on sound science. The Registry is also important for recreational fishermen. As the first full accounting of the scope of recreational saltwater fishing in the U.S., it will help to more fully demonstrate anglers' economic, conservation and marine stewardship impacts.

**Do recreational fishermen really have that great of an impact on the resource?**  
While many people assume the number of fish caught by recreational fishermen must pale in comparison to the commercial harvest, the truth is that for many popular species – such as striped bass, bluefish, tautog and black rockfish to name just a few – the recreational take is by far the largest proportion.

**LEARN MORE**  
[www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov) | 1-888-MRIP-411

Staff at Captain Zed's reports that flounder fishing has been good out of Wachapreague, but there has been a lot of throwbacks. Anglers are hooking flounder around Sandy Point (near Marker 6), the north side of the inlet (in front of Cedar Island), Millstone Creek, and Bradfords, Green, and Drawing channels. Most of the larger fish have been caught in the deeper water. Sand mullet have been biting in the area as well. Offshore, anglers hooked bluefin and yellowfin tuna, citation-sized king mackerel, and white marlin.

### Cape Charles

Captain Ray Cardone, of Cherrystone, reported a steady bite of croaker and kingfish. Two 19-inch flounder were hooked on his boat this week, and Captain Ray reports that cobia continued to bite near Buoy 36 A.

Chris and Mark at Chris' Bait and Tackle report plenty of action around the lower Eastern Shore.

Spadefish are hitting around Plantation Light and the CBBT-High Rise Bridge. Cobia are still providing plenty of action around Buoys 13 and 16, with a 60 pounder hitting the scales this week. Sea mullet have shown up in the vicinity of the little bridge onto Fisherman's Island, and flounder are still hitting at the Cell. Chris also made note that big red drum are still being found in the surf of the barrier islands and Fisherman's Island.

### **Lower Bay/Bridge Tunnel**

Two citation flounder were reported this week at Cobb's Marina. The first was 11 pounds, 15 ounces, and 29.5 inches long and was caught off of the Concrete Ships on June 26. The second was 8 pounds, 3 ounces, and 26.75 inches long and was caught near the fourth island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel on June 28.

Staff at Sunset Boating Center reports that local anglers are catching coolers full of croaker. Flounder have also been reported, but there is a high throwback ratio.

Salt Ponds Marina staff also reported two flounder citations this week (7 pounds, 9 ounces and 7 pounds, 2 ounces). Both fish were caught using bucktail at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. According to staff, fishing has been improving in the last few weeks, and anglers are hooking up a little bit of everything.

Wallace's Bait and Tackle staff reports there have been several citations for red drum and cobia over the last week. Hot spots for red drum have been the Highrise of the CBBT, Grandview, and Horseshoe Shoal. Cobia are being caught in the Baltimore Channel, along the CBBT, and the Hump. The largest flounder this week came from the CBBT at 9 pounds, 2 ounces (28.5 inches). The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Wallace's Bait and Tackle Cobia tournament this past Saturday, June 26, had a total of 39 teams entered. Many of the teams headed to Latimer Shoals and the eastern bay buoys to chase the brown beast of the Chesapeake that day. A 56.02-pound cobia brought in by Donald Knight with team Fortunate Son won the day and \$3,000+ 1<sup>st</sup> place prize money.

The York River area has a mixed bag with croaker, flounder, cobia, bluefish, and Spanish mackerel, according to staff at the York River Fishing Center. The Gloucester Point Pier has also reported croaker and flounder with a few spot mixed in.

Ken Neill, of the Peninsula Anglers Club and IGFA representative, contributed the following:

The turn out for the Flounder Bowl this past weekend was fantastic. A total of 97 boats entered this event held out of Dare Marina. Both the weather and the flounder cooperated for a fantastic day of flounder fishing. Flatfish were caught from Buoy 42, the Cell, 36A, the Hump, Back River Reef, Cape Henry Wreck, and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Anglers fishing the Buoy 42/Cell area had a slow day. That area was where the winning fish were caught in the 2009 tournament. This year, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel was the place to be. Almost all of the large flounder caught came from between the 4<sup>th</sup> island and the high rise section. The one exception was a flatfish, over 8 pounds, which Skid Joyner caught at Back River Reef. Live bait—mostly spot—produced most of the large fish. This year's Bay Champion is Brian Hogge and his "Hogchoker" team. Their 3-fish stringer weight was a very impressive 26.03 pounds.

They earned a check for \$5,000. They won the championship cup, and they also won the sponsors challenge trophy for their sponsor, Grafton Fishing Supply.

In addition to the suddenly hot flounder bite, cobia fishing is still going on strong. Both sight-casters and anglers on chum slicks are catching fish. York Spit, the Hump, Buoy 18, and the Inner Middle Ground have been good spots for chumming. Spanish mackerel are being caught throughout the lower bay and along the Ocean Front. Look for any current rip to concentrate these fish. Red drum are still available around the shoals at the mouth of the bay. Black drum are being caught around the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Spadefish are available along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and at the Chesapeake Light Tower. Some sheepshead are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. So far, it has not been the best year for either spadefish or sheepshead. Amberjack are thick at the Southern Towers. Bluefin tuna, false albacore, and king mackerel are available around 26-Mile Hill. Out over the 100-fathom curve, there is good dolphin and billfish action.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

The fishing scene should go off with a bang over the Independence Day weekend. The good fishing trend should continue its momentum through the holiday weekend, with flounder on most anglers' minds. Although not on fire, the flatfish bite is more consistent with the usual summer pattern lately, which is good.

With limits of keeper flounder becoming more common, anglers are pounding the Bay Bridge Tunnel and other lower bay structures, mostly with live bait and jigs. Many fish ranging over 22 inches, with a few doormat-sized trophies pushing over 7 pounds, are biting lately. Live spot is working well near structure, while 2-ounce jig heads adorned with plastics are a good choice for jigging around the piling bases. Strip baits are also producing some decent fish for drifters, where the edges of the Baltimore Channel and Buoy 36 are the best places to try this week. Lynnhaven and Rudee inlets are also giving up some good catches of keeper flatfish.

The Spanish mackerel scene is another hot topic. Folks trolling the lower bay, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and the ocean shorelines are finding limits of Spanish mackerel ranging up to 22 inches with plenty of Taylor bluefish. The largest fish are coming from off Cape Henry, near the pound nets. Small silver and gold spoons weighted with in-line sinkers will do the trick in anywhere from 18 to 30 feet of water. King mackerel are next. Anglers continue to report sightings of kings skying and crashing on bait inshore, while small kings are biting trolled baits on the inshore lumps.

Tautog are back in the picture, with anglers beginning to show some interest. Most fish caught near the Bridge Tunnel are ranging around 3 to 4 pounds. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel structure is also providing decent catches of sheepshead, with clams and fiddlers working well. Pier anglers are finding fish pushing over 11 pounds off the Sea Gull Fishing Pier at the 1<sup>st</sup> island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Triggerfish are also in the same areas.

Cobia catches are sliding a little this week, but some nice fish are still responding for both chummers and sight-casters. The really big fish should make another showing within a week or

so as they migrate out of the rivers. The Inner Middle grounds and Latimer Shoal are providing the best results on cut bait. A few red drum are also taking these baits intended for cobia.

Black drum continue to hit around the artificial islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, where anglers are hooking an occasional fish while casting grubs and shads.

Spadefish are pretty much everywhere right now. The Chesapeake Light Tower and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel are giving up good numbers of fish, with most fish averaging around 4 to 5 pounds lately. The Cell area is still the best area for the largest fish.

Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are becoming more active within Lynnhaven Inlet, with reports of some fish measuring up to 30 inches lately. The Virginia Beach Fishing Center reports that spot showed up inside Rudee Inlet. Croaker are an easy target throughout the lower bay, with some fish pushing to a pound near the Bay Bridge Tunnel, the Cell, and the Concrete Ships. According to the folks at Chris' Bait and Tackle, although the croaker have not yet arrived in Oyster, tarpon are making a stealthy showing, but there is no word of any hook-ups yet. Nice sea mullet are hitting in the southern small boat channel at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the inlet to Magothy Bay.

Amberjack are a good bet at the Southern Towers and some offshore wrecks, such as the Triangles, and the Ricks, and Hanks Wrecks. Live bait is working well, while jigs are also good alternative bait.

Deep droppers are still finding nice blueline and golden tilefish, wreckfish, and blackbelly rosefish. Some nice black sea bass are available on the nearshore wrecks as well as structures around 30 miles out. Black sea bass are also scattered among catches of blueline tilefish in deeper water.

The offshore scene is offering some good options. Billfish are starting to show, with a good blue marlin presence lately. The yellowfin tuna action is still slow, with only scattered fish boated so far. Bluefin tuna are the main draw right now, with school-sized fish ranging from 70 to 90 pounds taking trolled baits on the inshore sea mounds, from 26-Mile Hill to the Cigar. A few blackfin tuna and gaffer dolphin are also in the mix.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

Jetts Hardware reports that large croaker have been biting well, ranging in the 2- to 2.5-pound range, around the jetty and in the Great Wicomico River. A few flounder are around, and taylor bluefish are starting to bite.

Dan, with Smiths Point Marina, reports that the croaker bite is on with many in the 2-pound range. Taylor bluefish are biting, and white perch can be found around the jetties. Nice flounder are being caught south of the light, and striped bass are being caught on the Maryland side of the border. Some small spot are being caught but are really only bait-sized for the moment.

Butch, with Garretts' Marina, reports that those who braved the high temperatures were finding

croaker, but the larger ones were only found down river. A couple of cobia reports were whispered for the Rappahannock River as well.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Flounder fishing in the Buoy 42 and Cell area was slow this week. Big fish were caught at the high rise and the 4th island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, but little action was reported north of there. Local rivers and creeks are producing good numbers of flounder but not many keepers. A few large spadefish were caught at the Cell, but no citations have been seen here yet. The croaker bite in the Rappahannock continues. Spot weighing up to 3/4 pound are being caught around Cherry Point and the Spike. Taylor bluefish are busting schools of menhaden in the creeks and in open waters and can be trolled up as you cruise the bay at 3-5 knots. Cobia are biting at Buoys 13 and 16, around New Point Light, and on York Spit.

### **Virginia Beach**

Staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center reported flounder, puppy drum, bluefish, and early spot in the Inlet last week. A variety of species were found inshore, including Spanish mackerel, Taylor bluefish, and spadefish (at the Chesapeake Light Tower). Inshore, shark and cobia were found as well. Offshore action included bluefin and blackfin tuna, blue marlin, and numerous mahi mahi.

### **Virginia Piers**

Croaker, spot, flounder, and a few grey trout (mostly at night) were reported from the Ocean View Pier this week.

Staff at the Virginia Beach Pier reported spot and roundhead catches, with nighttime fishing being the most productive. An occasional bluefish or small flounder were caught as well. Pier anglers have seen a few cobia swimming around but haven't hooked any. Schools of menhaden have moved through as well.

At the Little Island Fishing Pier, at Sandbridge, fishing was slow last week. Roundhead have been caught daily, along with a few Spanish mackerel and bluefish. No spot have been reported yet.

Bluefish, with a few croakers and spot, were reported from the Buckroe Pier this week. Most of the hook-ups were small bait fish. Staff reports that fishing has improved through the week, as the temperatures have cooled a little.

### **Outer Banks, NC**

Offshore fishing out of Nags Head continues to be headlined by dolphin with most boats going out coming back with their limits. Other species being caught include tuna (yellowfin, blackfin, and bigeye), wahoos, king mackerel, bonito, and amberjacks. The billfishing is producing a few blue and white marlin as well as sailfish, but the fishing is not as good as one might hope for. Bottom fishing results have been a mixed bag with blackbelly rosefish, vermilion and red snapper, snow and yellowedge grouper, and black sea bass. There are still striped bass eight miles offshore, but it is illegal to target or keep them from federal waters (greater than three miles offshore). Nearshore artificial reefs

were holding triggerfish, tautog, black drum, and sheepshead. Nearshore, surf and pier anglers found good bites of bluefish and Spanish mackerel on artificial lures. Sea mullet, spot, croaker, puffers, pompano, spadefish, flounder, and other summer denizens were being caught on cut bait and blood worms. The sounds and inlet continue to see flounder and speckled trout being the main targets. Flounder can be found on the dropoffs next to sand bars of the inlet, and the trout will be working around sea grass beds and bridges in the sound. Cobia are still being caught in the night time hours.

The fishing south of Oregon Inlet has been slow due to the strong southwest winds. Some bluefish and Spanish mackerel were around the Avon Pier, with plugs being the main weapon. Small flounder, sea mullet, and bluefish were reported in the area of Ramp 49.

Strong southwest winds kept most boats in port the past few days. When boats did go out, dolphin and blackfin tuna were being caught. The inlet was producing bluefish and Spanish mackerel. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum), could be found in the channels and around the oyster beds adjoining salt marshes.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

# THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,*

**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.**

**The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:**



COBIA	SHEEPSHEAD	RED DRUM	BLACK DRUM	TAUTOG
KING MACKEREL	SPANISH MACKEREL	TILEFISH (BLUELINE OR GOLDEN)	WRECKFISH, SNOWY GROUPEL, WARSAW GROUPEL	BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)

**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT, HAT, BOAT WHISTLE OR MEASURING TAPE FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

**Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:**

- Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)
- Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)
- Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)
- Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)
- Virginia Beach Fishing Center (Virginia Beach)



# VIRGINIA SALTWATER Fisherman's Journal



## Get Hooked!

Report at

[www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.

The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing

experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

Individual measurement of caught, and released, on the most highly prized fish, such as red drum, striped bass, and summer flounder, provides a greater benefit to everyone. This past year, data from volunteer angler surveys were an important component in the calculation to reduce size limits for summer flounder in Virginia. However, Virginia data from Virginia anglers have not yet reached the level needed to stand alone. If the ability to reduce the size limit occurs in the future, the catch-and-release information on undersized summer flounder would be of great benefit.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions, and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal" and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

# Introducing the Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program!

◆ Please help keep our waterways cleaner and safer for:

- Fish
- Birds
- Marine Mammals
- Boaters and swimmers

◆ Deposit used or tangled monofilament fishing line into specially marked containers!

◆ Contact the VMRC to sponsor additional bins your area



## VMRC Managed Locations\*

Buckroe Fishing Pier, Hampton  
Capt. Bob's Marina, Chincoteague  
Chris' Bait and Tackle, Cape Charles  
Don's Bait and Tackle, Wachapreague  
Lancaster County (multiple locations)  
Long Bay Pointe Marina, Virginia Beach  
Newport News (multiple locations)  
Ocean View Fishing Pier, Norfolk  
Wallace's Bait and Tackle, Hampton

\*DGIF manages other locations throughout Virginia

The Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program is run jointly by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with support from the Boat US Foundation and the Virginia Aquarium.

If you have any questions about the program, or suggestions for new container locations, please contact Alicia Nelson at (757) 247-2244 or email [alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov).



# National Saltwater Angler Registry



# New Law In

# 2010

## ATTENTION Virginia Saltwater Fishermen



**Before You Drop  
Your Line in the  
Water, Remember  
the Basics:**

**Under a new Federal law,  
most Virginia recreational  
saltwater fisherman must  
register with the National  
Saltwater Angler Registry.**

Registration is an important tool that will help NOAA and anglers work together to conserve our oceans and preserve our nation's rich tradition of saltwater fishing. Registering is **quick, easy and FREE** in 2010.



**To learn more or to register**

[www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov)

**1-888-MRIP-411**

**ARTICLE FOR MEDIA REFERENCE OR DIRECT PLACEMENT**  
**SOURCE: NOAA FISHERIES**

**NOAA CONTACT**  
FORBES DARBY  
TEL: (301) 713-9501  
[Forbes.Darby@noaa.gov](mailto:Forbes.Darby@noaa.gov)

**VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES**  
**COMMISSION CONTACT**  
JOHN M.R. BULL  
TEL: (757) 247-2269  
[john.bull@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:john.bull@mrc.virginia.gov)

## **New Law: Most Virginia Saltwater Fishermen Need to Register with NOAA Before They Fish**

### *Virginia Registrations Lagging Behind Other States*

MRIP – According to the latest numbers from NOAA Fisheries, Virginia saltwater recreational fishermen appear to be lagging behind their peers in other states when it comes to complying with a new Federal law to help conserve our oceans and maintain vibrant, sustainable fisheries.

Under the law, most Virginia saltwater fishermen are required to register with the new National Saltwater Angler Registry before they go fishing this year.

As of January 1, 2010, Virginia fishermen need to register if they:

- Fish for or catch anadromous species in tidal waters; these are fish like striped bass, shad or river herring that live in the oceans but spawn in fresh water, OR
- Fish in the Federal waters more than three miles from the ocean shore or from the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, OR
- Don't meet any of the exceptions in the law.

Those exceptions include anglers who are under the age of 16; only fish on licensed charter, party or guide boats; hold a Highly Migratory Species Angling permit; or hold and are fishing under a valid commercial license. In addition, out-of-state saltwater anglers who are already registered with NOAA do not need to re-register to fish in Virginia.

Fishermen are reminded that regardless of their registration status, it is important to learn and follow the rules where they are fishing. The registration requirement is in addition to, and has no bearing on, existing or future fishery management regulations such as size and bag limits, closed seasons and areas, *or saltwater fishing license purchase requirements*. For example, no person, whether or not registered by NOAA, is permitted to harvest or possess striped bass in the US EEZ.

Registration is quick and easy and will be free in 2010. Anglers simply need to log on to **[www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov)** and click on the Angler Registry link, or call the toll-free registration line at **1-888-MRIP411** (1-888-674-7411). Anglers will need to provide their name, date of birth, address and telephone number, and will receive a registration number that will allow them begin fishing immediately. After approximately 30 days, they will receive a registration card in the mail.

Virginia is lagging behind many other East Coast states in the number of anglers who have registered, as required. Over the six months the registry has been in effect so far, only 26,000 Virginia saltwater anglers have registered, compared to 75,000 in Maryland and 137,000 in New Jersey. In fact, the smallest state in the country, Rhode Island, has seen almost as many saltwater anglers register (23,000) as Virginia.

The registry is an important tool that will help fishermen and policy makers work together to better account for the contributions and impacts of saltwater anglers on ocean ecosystems and coastal economies. It is part of a national overhaul of the way NOAA collects and reports recreational fishing data. The goal of the initiative – known as the

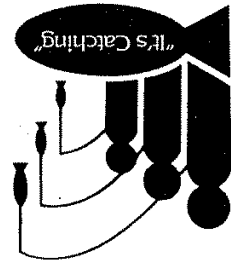
Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP – is to provide the most accurate information possible that can be used to determine the health of fish stocks. Reliable, universally trusted data will in turn aid anglers, fisheries managers and other stakeholders in their combined efforts to effectively and fairly set the rules that will ensure the long-term sustainability of recreational fishing.

For more information, visit [www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov).

In 2011, Virginia will implement its own free saltwater registration program, under a new state law that goes into effect July 1. The Virginia Fisherman Identification Program will collect the information necessary to exempt saltwater anglers from having to register annually with the federal government and pay any future federal registration charges. The free, annual state registration will be in place by Jan. 1, 2011.

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VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION  
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NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA 23607

*Practice*

## CAREFUL CATCH

**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

**Exhaustion \* Loss of Slime \* Wounds \* Time out of Water**