

Maryland Fishing License and Maryland Registration FAQ Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is the saltwater license and Maryland registration the same thing? Why do you have both?

No, they are different. A license allows an individual to fish recreationally in the tidal waters of the State. The Maryland registration is need by those individuals fishing on a boat licensed with a Saltwater Boat decal, on waterfront property as a owner or their family member, or in a free fishing area. The point of the registration is to obtain contact information on the angler that we would have received through the purchase of a license so Maryland can provide it to the National Marine Fisheries Service for the National Saltwater Angler Registration and comply with federal rules. We also provide National Marine Fisheries Service the contact information for people that have purchased the license. This provides National Marine Fisheries Service a database of all anglers fishing in Maryland which they use to survey anglers and determine catch estimates.

2. What is the federal National Saltwater Angler Registry and its purpose?

In 2010, the National Marine Fisheries Service mandated all recreational anglers fishing in coastal waters to complete a National Saltwater Angler Registry. The registry serves as a national "phone book," which helps National Marine Fisheries Service quickly and easily reach current fisherman to learn about their most recent fishing activities. In 2011, National Marine Fisheries Service instituted a \$15 registration fee. Also in 2011, legislation modified Maryland law to comply with the National Saltwater Angler Registry so that Maryland anglers would be exempt from paying the National Marine Fisheries Service registration fee. Because of the changes, Maryland now has a cooperative agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service and Maryland licensed or registered angler's are automatically included in this national "phone book" of the National Saltwater Angler Registry. The information collected will help to develop better estimates of recreational fish harvest, and will help ensure that fishing rules are based on sound science. For more details about the National Saltwater Angler Registry, visit National Marine Fisheries Service's website at countmyfish.noaa.gov/register/

3. What happens with my Maryland license or registration information?

As per our cooperative federal agreement, the department will send the required information to the National Marine Fisheries Service for inclusion with data from other coastal states to conduct surveys of recreational anglers. The contact information will be utilized by the National Marine Fisheries Service to contact random saltwater anglers or for-hire boats in the registry to ask questions about their recent saltwater fishing activity. The information is confidential and will only be provided to the National Marine Fisheries Service as required for Maryland to maintain its exempted status.

4. So is the National Saltwater Angler Registration provided by National Marine Fisheries Service needed in Maryland?

No, it is not needed, and does not allow you to fish in Maryland. Beginning in 2011, Maryland's laws were changed requiring all anglers, unless exempt (covered in question 5), fishing in Maryland tidal waters to be licensed. That change now means that anglers fishing in Maryland waters no longer need a National Saltwater Angler Registry number, but they do need a Maryland license (or in some cases a free Maryland angler registration), which complies with the laws that created the National Registry. In short, anglers in Maryland waters do not need to obtain the federal angler registry, but they do need to comply with Maryland licensing laws.

5. Who needs a Maryland license?

A person that does not meet the following exemptions:

- Is less than 16 years of age;
- Is a registered angler with the State of Maryland and is fishing from a boat holding a valid tidal/salt water license issued by Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the Commonwealth of Virginia or the State of Maryland.
- Possesses a valid commercial tidal fish license;
- Is fishing from a licensed commercial fishing pier;
- Is a registered angler with the State of Maryland and is fishing in a free fishing area;
- Is the owner or the owner's non-paying guest fishing from private real property or an attached pier in the Potomac River;
- Is the owner or the owner's immediate family member with a Maryland registration fishing from private real property or an attached pier in Maryland tidal waters;
- Is fishing from a licensed charter boat;
- Is fishing on a free fishing day – the first two Saturdays in June and July 4;
- Is a registered angler with the State of Maryland and possesses a Virginia Saltwater recreational fishing license;
- Possesses a Potomac River Fisheries Commission recreational fishing license; or
- Is a resident of Maryland, on active duty with the armed forces, on leave with official leave orders.

6. Who needs to register with Maryland?

- Passengers on a boat with a Pleasure Boat Decal
- Waterfront property owners and their immediate family members
- Anglers fishing in free fishing area; and
- Anglers in possession of a Virginia Saltwater license

7. How long is my license or registration valid?

A Maryland license or registration is valid for 365 days from the date of purchase.

8. How do I register in Maryland?

Anglers may register through the COMPASS website: compass.dnr.maryland.gov/dnrcompassportal. If you experience difficulty using the Maryland Saltwater Angler Registry and need assistance, email us for a response during normal business hours. Anglers must have either a printed or electronic copy of their Maryland/PRFC Saltwater Angler Registration while fishing as proof of compliance.

9. I only fish on party/charter boats -do I still need to register?

No, if you are fishing aboard appropriately licensed party or charter boats you do not need to be registered or licensed.

10. I only fish in the coastal waters of the Atlantic outside State waters (3 miles). What do I need to fish?

You need to register with the National Saltwater Angler Registry unless you are:

- Under 16;
- Only fishing on a state^a or federally licensed charter or guide boats^b as part of a paid charter;
- Named on an individual Highly Migratory Species Angling Category Permit^c; OR
- Already licensed or registered through an exempted state^d

^a The state charter license in Maryland is the charterboat decal provided by Natural Resources Article 4745(d) Annotated Code of Maryland. Having an individual Maryland charter captain license (TFL, FGN or FGR) does NOT exempt the anglers on your charter vessel. You must have the charter boat decal affixed to your vessel.

^b This includes vessels that hold a valid federal charter/headboat vessel permit as outlined in federal regulation. These permits include the Atlantic HMS Charter/Headboat, and charter/headboat permits for: New England Multispecies, South Atlantic Coastal Migratory Pelagic Fish, South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper, Atlantic Dolphin and Wahoo, Summer Flounder, Atlantic Mackerel, Black Sea Bass, Atlantic Bluefish, or Scup. Anglers fishing on a vessel with these permits and as a part of a paid party do not need to be registered or licensed. Persons who are guests on, or fish aboard vessels that hold other categories of federal permits (e.g. a HMS general category permit or a commercial permit) are not exempt, and must register unless they meet one of the other exemptions.

^c Only the individual HMS Angling Category permit holder – the person whose name is on the permit – is exempt from the registration requirement. Others fishing aboard the boat will need to register separately unless they meet one of the previously listed exemptions. Those who only possess an Atlantic HMS General Category permit, and those who fish on the vessels of HMS General Category permit holders, must register with the National Saltwater Angler Registry or meet one of the other exemptions.

^d Anglers holding a current and valid saltwater fishing license or registration from any state or territory EXCEPT Hawaii, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands are automatically registered. Potomac River Fisheries Commission licenses are also exempt under a Maryland Agreement with National Marine Fisheries Service.

11. Do I need a Maryland license or registration to land fish in Maryland that were caught in federal waters recreationally?

No. Maryland's license or registration are needed to engage in angling activity in Maryland waters, not to land fish.

12. I am licensed / registered in another state. May I fish in Maryland's waters without a Maryland registration or Maryland license?

No. If you are licensed or registered in an exempted State (any state or territory EXCEPT Hawaii, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands) you may fish in federal waters; but, fishing in Maryland waters requires a Maryland license or Maryland registration.

13. If passengers are covered under my Maryland Consolidated Chesapeake Bay & Coastal Sport Boat Decal, why do they need to register?

The boat decal allows everyone on board a vessel used for pleasure to fish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and the state waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Atlantic coastal bays and tributaries in lieu of individual licenses. However, in order to get into the national “phone book” required by the National Saltwater Angler Registry these individuals must register with Maryland. Maryland will provide the contact information for all licensed and registered anglers in Maryland to National Marine Fisheries Service.

14. I bought the boat decal and I was told I need a FIN number. What is that?

You were given incorrect information. A FIN number is registration valid only for Delaware. If you bought a Maryland Consolidated Chesapeake Bay & Coastal Sport Boat Decal you are provided a complimentary Bay & Coastal Individual sport fishing license. You do not need to register in Maryland.

15. I am a nonresident. Can I buy the Consolidated Bay Sport Boat decal?

Yes, the Boat decal is available to residents and non-residents for the same price of \$50.

16. Does my boat have to be registered in Maryland to have the Consolidated Bay Sport decal?

No, it does not have to be a Maryland boat to have a Maryland boat fishing decal.

17. If I registered when I fished on my friend’s boat with a decal, am I covered to fish from the shore?

No, the Maryland registration is only valid on a boat licensed with a decal, in free fishing areas, or on private waterfront property.

18. Do I need to register on a free fishing day?

No, you do not need a license or a registration to fish on a free fishing day in Maryland. The free fishing days are the first two Saturdays in June and July 4.

19. Do I need to register to fish in a free fishing area?

You need a Maryland registration to fish in a free fishing area in tidal waters. This means you do not need a registration to fish at the free fishing area in Gambrill State Park. Click here for a list/map of all free fishing areas in the state: dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/license-free.aspx

20. Do I need to register in order to harvest crabs or shellfish?

No. The Maryland registration is only required for finfishing.

21. I have a Maryland commercial fishing license; do I need to register if I go fishing recreationally?

No. A commercial fishing license includes recreational fishing. Your contact information will also be forwarded to National Marine Fisheries Service for the survey.

23. I live in a waterfront condo. Am I exempt as a property owner if I fish from our community pier?

If you are a condo owner:

- You **may** fish from common property without first getting a fishing license. This is because every owner in the condominium is deemed to own in part the common property.
- You **must** still register in Maryland.

24. I am a homeowner and member of a Homeowner's Association that has a waterfront pier/shoreline. Do I need a license to fish from that pier/shoreline?

If you are a homeowner in a Homeowner's Association:

- You **must** get a fishing license prior to fishing from common areas owned by the homeowner's association. This is because you do not own that land from which you are fishing.
- You are **not** required to get a fishing license if you are fishing from your own waterfront property, even if you are in a homeowner's association community. However, you **must** still register in Maryland.

25. I am staying in a timeshare. Am I exempt as a property owner in the timeshare?

If you are a timeshare owner:

- You **may** fish from common property without first getting a fishing license. This is because the timeshares in Maryland are set up with ownership rights similar to those of condo owners.
- You **must** still register in Maryland.

26. What licenses are covered under the Reciprocal License Agreement with Virginia and Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC)?

Virginia saltwater recreational fishing licenses with a Maryland/PRFC registration honored in Maryland tidal waters are:

- Individual annual license
- Individual temporary (10-day) license
- Private boat license
- Charter boat and head boat licenses (covers all persons fishing on boat and a registration is not needed)

- Lifetime saltwater Recreational Fishing License
- Special Lifetime recreational Fishing License for the permanently and totally disabled
- Special Combined (FW/SW) Sportfish License
- Rental boat license (covers all persons fishing on boat).

Maryland saltwater recreational fishing licenses with a Virginia registration honored in Virginia tidal waters are:

- 365-day resident Chesapeake Bay and Coastal sport fishing license
- Short-term (7-day) resident Chesapeake Bay and Coastal sport fishing license
- 365-day nonresident Chesapeake Bay and Coast sport fishing license
- Short-term (7-day) nonresident Chesapeake Bay and Coastal sport fishing license
- Lifetime Chesapeake Bay and Coastal sport fishing license for former prisoners of war or 100% service connected disabled American veterans,
- Combination commercial/recreational (tidal fish license)
- Private boat license
- Consolidated senior sport fishing license.

Charter boat and head boat licenses (covers all persons fishing on boat and a registration is not needed) Potomac River Fisheries Commission recreational fishing licenses honored in Maryland tidal waters:

- Individual annual license
- Private boat license (covers all persons with a Maryland/PRFC registration fishing on boat)
- Charter boat license (covers all persons fishing on boat)

Maryland and Virginia saltwater recreational fishing licenses and their registrations are honored in the tidal waters of the Potomac River.

27. If a person with a lifetime VA license moves to Maryland, does Maryland still honor the license or will the person need to purchase a Maryland License?

Maryland honors the lifetime Virginia license even if your place of residency has changed. The lifetime license is covered under the Reciprocal License Agreement with Virginia. However, anglers with the VA lifetime license will need to register in Maryland each year.

28. I am a senior and exempt from a fishing license in Virginia, am I also exempt in Maryland as part of the reciprocal agreement?

No. The reciprocal agreement only covers licenses, not license exemptions. You will need to purchase a license in order to fish in Maryland.

29. Do I need a license or registration if I am not fishing, but simply helping my child, who is under 16, learn to fish?

Yes, if you do anything that might be construed as fishing you need a license or, if appropriate, a Maryland registration. For example, if you bait the hook and toss the line, you are fishing. If you take the fish off the hook for the child, you are fishing. If you just sit in the boat and simply observe, you are not fishing and do not need a license or registration.

30. I am fishing from shore at Assateague National Park, do I need a Maryland license?

Yes, unless under 16 years of age you are required to have a Maryland license when fishing from Assateague National Park. Park law enforcement is enforcing the Maryland license requirement.