

Maryland E-Reporting with FACTS™ –

Frequently Asked Questions



DNR, in coordination with Watermen, is developing a new daily electronic trip and harvest reporting system, called FACTS™, for all of Maryland's commercial fisheries to improve harvest accountability and overall management of the fisheries. Below are concerns we have heard from Watermen and our responses. We would love to talk more about any worries or questions you may have (see our contact info on the next page).

Watermen Concerns

DNR Responses

I don't have time to enter harvest electronically.

For watermen using the system during the blue crab and striped bass pilots: **2-5** minutes to send hails and no more than 10 minutes for all steps.

I am OK with entering harvest electronically, but hailing is a violation of my rights.

Hailing is the least intrusive and most efficient way to ensure accurate and timely information as well as the opportunity to verify harvest. DNR stands ready to work with industry to ensure that hailing is configured so that it is effective without being overly burdensome.

WITHOUT A HAIL WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS:

- DNR does not know you are fishing that day and therefore does not expect harvest data for that day (timely reporting not guaranteed).
- The benefits of receiving faster harvest data are lost. Watermen could submit harvest the day, week, or month after the trip and there would be no way to account for this.
- The opportunity for a roving monitor (as with the blue crab system) or for NRP to verify harvest disappears so there is no way to know if reported harvest is correct.
- Watermen lose business flexibility and DNR is forced to manage conservatively to avoid harvest overages.

DNR should not be tracking me everywhere I go.

This system **DOES NOT** track vessel movement and **does not** ask for your precise fishing location. The fishing area requested is the same as what is on the current paper forms (NOAA code). The hail informs DNR that you are engaged in fishing today and provides a landing location and time which can easily be revised at any time.

Why do I need to provide a landing location and time?

The weakest part of current harvest reports is not being able to verify what was reported. Sometimes people report incorrect information because they did not accurately remember their trip, or because they used the wrong unit of measurement (bushels vs pounds). Some people admit they simply don't tell the truth. Eventually, DNR would like to employ roving monitors who meet vessels at the dock to verify the amount of catch on the boat.

I keep hearing about these 'roving monitors' – what is up with that?

Monitors are not enforcement, they are an independent source to verify harvest. The presence of monitors and the chance that anyone may be checked anytime encourages accurate reporting. There were monitors present for the blue crab pilot, paid for by the NOAA blue crab fishery disaster grant. Because DNR does not currently have funding to employ roving monitors for the new system, NRP may be the ones to verify harvest.

Watermen Concerns

DNR Responses

Plans change during the day – Why should I tell DNR each time I move my boat?

You will not need to notify DNR if you change fishing locations during the day.

What if my day is really busy and I just forget to use the system?

If you forget to send your trip end hail/harvest report, then you will get a message from the system reminding you to do so before starting a new trip. The Pilot Program regulations (COMAR 08.02.01.10) are there in case something egregious happens. If it is a minor incident, the expectation is that enforcement would contact the Fisheries manager involved in the pilot program to determine a proper course of action. DNR will continue to work with the industry to develop administrative penalties (not criminal) for misuse of or failure to use the system.

I'll get in trouble if I show up at the dock 5 minutes late – that's ridiculous.

You will not get in trouble if you do not show up at the dock exactly at the time stated in your hail. We ask that people do their best to estimate time of landing so that harvest on board the vessel can be checked by a roving monitor or by NRP. Verification of harvest is critical for improvement of management and keeps everyone as honest as possible.

I cannot possibly estimate the amount of catch on my boat before I arrive at the dock – and I don't want to get in trouble if I get it wrong.

As part of the E-Reporting pilot, DNR is asking watermen to estimate the total weight, and in some cases the number, for species caught while on board their vessel prior to landing. This allows opportunity for the catch to potentially be verified at the dock and improve quota management for various species, such as yellow perch. For striped bass, this also allows for the additional business flexibility of taking two trips between check-ins and allowing someone else to check your catch for you. Currently, there is no penalty if your estimates differ from the actual weight and count.

How much will this system cost me to use?

If you already have cell phone coverage or a data plan you are good to go—no extra cost to use the system. Given all of the benefits that the new system offers to watermen, managers, and the citizens of Maryland, DNR intends to cover the cost of system development without seeking cost recovery from the commercial fishing industry. Once the system is fully implemented and in wide-spread use, DNR can better understand the costs and savings of the system, and work with industry to develop a cost-recovery plan if needed.

What if I don't 'do' electronics/internet? What if I don't have cell service?

DNR realizes people have different technological capabilities. DNR worked closely with watermen in the blue crab pilot to address cell phone coverage problems. As a result, a Call Center is now available for participants to call and speak with an operator who will enter their trip information. DNR stands ready to work with the industry to continue to address concerns about lack of access to electronics.

If DNR is so worried about watermen submitting correct harvest data, just put more NRP on the water to check harvest.

There are about 5,500 individuals licensed to commercially fish in Maryland. No matter how many NRP officers we have, they cannot effectively and efficiently cover the commercial fishery without a tool that helps them understand how many people are on the water on a given day and where they will land their catch. Checking a boat half way through a fishing trip on the water is of limited use, since much can happen after the check.



For any additional questions or concerns please contact:

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