



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
FISHING AND BOATING SERVICES

**BULK TAGGING OF WILD-CAUGHT OYSTERS FROM THE PUBLIC FISHERY IN MARYLAND
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

In accordance with the National Shellfish Sanitation Program Model Ordinance, the Department has promulgated regulations to allow the use of bulk harvester tags for a single lot of oysters. The regulations, COMAR 08.02.04.04C, became effective April 1, 2024. The new tagging program allows an individual license-holder harvesting from a single oyster bar in a single trip on a single day to use a Department-issued bulk tag. The bulk tags include additional information that make it unique from an individual tag.

This document is for wild-caught oysters from the public fishery only. Please refer to the Bulk Tagging of Farm-Raised Shellfish FAQ document if you are commercially harvesting from a lease in Maryland.

Is bulk tagging required? Can I still use individual tags?

No, bulk tagging is not required. You may continue to use individual tags on each oyster bushel as currently permitted. Some harvesters or dealers will prefer to continue to individual tag for a variety of reasons. If you choose to bulk tag, you must use a Department-issued tag unless you are licensed and certified as a dealer by both the Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Department of Health.

When will tags be available and how do I obtain bulk tags?

Tags will be available for purchase at one of the [Department of Natural Resources Regional Service Centers](#) around Oct 1, 2024. Tags must be purchased in person and an appointment is required. Tags may be purchased for a family member or another individual under certain circumstances as is the case with individual harvester tags. There will be a limit of one pack of bulk tags that may be purchased at a time. The pack will contain 100 tags.

What is a “lot” as it refers to bulk tagging oysters?

A lot is a number of legal oyster containers all harvested from the same oyster bar on the same day by the same license-holder that will remain physically together at least until they have been sold to a licensed and certified shellfish dealer.

Can I harvest from more than one oyster bar in a day and use a bulk tag?

No. You may only use a bulk tag if harvesting from one oyster bar per day. If you plan to harvest from multiple bars or are not sure when you head out, you should use individual tags.

Where do I put my tag?

If you can ensure all the containers in a lot will stay physically together until they are sold at the licensed and certified dealer, attach the tag to one of the containers in the lot. If multiple bushel baskets are used, tag one of these baskets. All harvest tags must be physically with the product during transportation until they are sold to a licensed and certified shellfish dealer. All shellfish must be sold and in the possession of the dealer no later than 9 p.m. on the day of harvest regardless of the type of tag used.



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I only have individual tags on board. Can I use an individual tag as a bulk tag?

Unless licensed and certified as a dealer by both the Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Department of Health, harvesters must obtain bulk tags from the Department from one of the Regional Service Centers. Individuals who are licensed and certified shellfish dealers have the ability to produce their own tags instead of purchasing them from the Department, however, all of the tag requirements and specifications are the same. Using a tag that does not meet the specifications could result in penalties including being in possession of untagged oysters.

Do these new bulk tags affect Skipjack harvesting and tagging?

No. Skipjack harvesting and tagging requirements remain the same.

Can I reuse a tag?

No, harvester tags should never be reused, regardless of if they are bulk or individual.

Can I use a bulk tag if I intend to sell my product to multiple dealers?

No, the entire lot of shellfish must be sold only to one licensed and certified dealer. If you intend to sell to multiple dealers, you must individually tag each bushel. If you are both a harvester and a licensed and certified shellfish dealer and still have questions, please give us a call.

Only one type of tag is allowed on board at a time?

Yes, an individual may not have both farm-raised and wild tags on board or individual and bulk tags on board at the same time.

I hold one license and have another licensed harvester on board. We intend to catch and land two limits for the day. Can we still bulk tag?

Yes, you may both utilize a bulk tag for your portion of the total harvest. Each tag must have a harvester license number on it. No more than two bulk tags can be used on one boat and the two lots of shellfish must be physically separated onboard the vessel and during transport to a licensed and certified dealer, one lot for each license-holder. Both harvesters must deliver their product to the dealer and complete the buy ticket transaction. Only one tag type may be present on board so both licensees must tag in the same manner (one license-holder cannot bulk tag if the other individually tags each bushel).

While the use of a bulk tag provides flexibility to harvesters working a single oyster bar on a single day and selling to a single dealer, it is not meant to replace individual tagging for all other circumstances. You are not required to bulk tag and individual tags provide significantly more flexibility in where you can harvest and sell your product. We recommend that when in doubt, use traditional individual tags.

If you have additional questions about bulk tagging wild-caught oysters from the public fishery, please contact Frank Marengi at 443-339-4622 or frank.marengi@maryland.gov