

FACTS Charter Pilot Program 2024 Chesapeake Bay - Special Striped Bass Harvest Flexibility

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **What is the striped bass special harvest flexibility for captains enrolled in the FACTS program for the 2024 for-hire open season?**

As described under Condition 6 of the FACTS Charter Pilot Permit Agreement:

Pilot participants operating under a Resident Fishing Guide License (FGR), Nonresident Fishing Guide License (FGN), Master Fishing Guide License (FGM) or Unlimited Tidal Fish License (TFL) will have the flexibility for the captain and one mate to each possess up to one striped bass per person per day, within the open recreational striped bass season after May 15. All clients on board a vessel operated by a pilot program participant may possess up to one striped bass per person per day, within the open recreational striped bass season after May 15.

Due to restrictions in COMAR 08.02.01.10, all other fishing guides operating in Maryland waters are not eligible for this flexibility.

- **How does the flexibility work?**

- The captain and one mate, if present, may each keep one striped bass per day.
- If there are two mates on board the vessel, only one may keep a striped bass on that trip.
- Each angler/passenger on the vessel may keep a maximum of one striped bass per day.

Example – A captain uses FACTS to run two trips on the same day during the open recreational season:

- The captain has two (2) mates on board with a party of eight (8) anglers. No one on the boat has already taken home a striped bass that day. The vessel limit for that trip would be:
1 for Captain + 1 for Mate + 8 for Anglers/Passengers = 10 striped bass
- On the second trip of the day, both the captain and one of his two (2) mates kept a fish on the first trip of the day. They have a party on board of eight (8) anglers, none of whom has already kept a striped bass that day. The vessel limit for that trip would be:
0 for Captain + 1 for Mate + 8 for Anglers/Passengers = 9 striped bass

- **Why did the program's special harvest flexibility change?**

Since FACTS Pilot Program participants are the only captains to report their harvest in real-time, DNR Fishing and Boating Services sought and received approval from ASMFC to offer a modified special harvest flexibility for the upcoming for-hire season. As a result, captains participating in the FACTS Charter Pilot Program will be able to land up to two additional striped bass (one for the captain and one for a mate, if present, per day) in addition to their clients' 1 fish per person limit.

- **How does the new flexibility change the way a captain enters their trips in FACTS?**

This is what the updated Start Hail and End Hail forms look like in FACTS:

The screenshot shows a form with the following fields and a callout box:

- Gear Type:** A dropdown menu with "HOOK AND LINE" selected.
- Crew Count:** A text input field containing the number "2".
- Angler Count:** A text input field containing the number "6".
- Callout Box:** A yellow box with a blue header "Program Flexibility - Within the open recreational striped bass season after May 15: The captain and one mate may each possess up to one striped bass per person per day. All clients on board the vessel may possess up to one striped bass per person per day. [Click here for more details](#)".

- **Crew Count (New!)** – Since the permit includes a member of the crew in the flexibility’s vessel limit, it is important that the Crew Count number be accurate. The Crew Count should be updated, if the number of mates on the vessel changes after the Start Hail has been submitted.
- **Angler Count** – Since the permit includes the number of persons/clients on board the vessel, it is important that the Angler Count number be accurate. The Angler Count should be updated, if fewer or more passengers arrive than expected after the Start Hail has been submitted.
- FACTS now displays the terms of the permit conditions for the special harvest flexibility, where the captains enter their Crew Count (new) and Angler Count when they start and end their trips.
- There is also the option to “[Click here for more details](#)” to view this FAQ flyer.

- **What trip information can Natural Resources Police (NRP) see in FACTS?**

All NRP officers have their own FACTS accounts that allow them to see trip activity in real-time. Officers in the field are able to confirm the permit status for a captain, view active Start Hails and/or End Hails (vessels, crew count, and angler count), and see what has been submitted for landing locations and anticipated landing times. The NOAA code for where harvest activity is taking place is entered at the end of the trip, during the End Hail when the vessel heads back to the marina. Officers cannot see harvest information reported by program participants.

- **Can captains running charters on the coast report their trips using FACTS?**

No – The scope of the pilot program is for Chesapeake Bay harvest reporting, only.

- **Are captains from other states with reciprocity agreements able to use the flexibility?**

No - Regulations for a 'pilot program' only apply to Maryland licenses. This means that participating captains would need to have a Non-Resident Guide License (FGN), a Resident Guide License (FGR), Master Fishing Guide License (FGM) or Unlimited Tidal Fishing License (TFL) in order to benefit from the program's striped bass special harvest flexibility.