

COMMERCIAL LICENSE TARGETS – Updates

What is being considered?

The Department needs to update the commercial license targets. Modifications to the authorization targets reflect the number of tidal fish license conversions since January 15, 2025.

Natural Resources Article, §4-701, Annotated Code of Maryland allows the conversion (downgrade) of an unlimited tidal fish license (UTFL) into its individual component authorizations and allows the Department to adjust all authorizations accordingly. Applicants may choose which license components of the UTFL they want to retain. Downgrading a UTFL decreases the UTFL target and increases the target of each license type that is included in a UTFL (resident fishing guide (FGR); unlimited finfish harvester (FIN); crab harvester 300 pot (CB3); clam harvester (CLM); oyster harvester (OYH); oyster dredge boat (ODB); and conch, cancer crab, turtle, lobster (CTL)). The number and type of authorizations involved in a downgrade of a UTFL provide the basis for changes to the license authorization target levels.

There were no downgrades during the 2024/2025 license year and one during the 2025/2026 license year. In summary, the UTFL number would be decreased by one and the number for FGR, FIN, CB3, CLM, OYH, ODB, and CTL would be increased by one each. The downgrades have not been captured in previous regulation proposals and are correct as of April 15, 2026.

Why is this change necessary?

Modifying the license targets is necessary to accurately reflect the number of authorizations available.

Who will this affect?

Anyone who is waiting for a commercial fishing license to become available. The Department's licensing system reflects the accurate numbers, but this action is necessary to update the numbers in regulation.

Has this change been discussed with advisory bodies or other interested or impacted individuals?

This idea was scoped with the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission (SFAC) and the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission (TFAC) at their meetings in April 2026. Commissioners generally supported the idea based on statute requirements but intend to have a discussion in the future to determine if the statute needs to be modified regarding downgrading licenses.

Additional Information

Statute - [Natural Resources Article, §4-701, Annotated Code of Maryland](#)

Regulation - [Code of Maryland Regulations \(COMAR\) 08.02.01.05](#)

Regulatory Process

Fishing rules in Maryland may be created by either the General Assembly or the Department. When the Department creates a fishing rule, it is called a regulation. When the General Assembly creates a rule, it is called a statute. The Department often has to create a regulation to

implement a statute. The regulatory process begins with scoping and the Department follows normal [procedures](#) as concepts move forward.

During the scoping process, the Department gathers suggestions and ideas from stakeholders and others about how to solve a fishery problem or address a need. The goal of scoping is to identify issues, potential impacts, and reasonable alternatives associated with the issues so that management actions can be developed. After the public has had an opportunity to comment on possible management actions during the scoping process, the Department considers these comments and develops an appropriate management strategy.

When would this be effective?

The Department projects that this change could be effective in the summer of 2026. However, the exact date cannot be determined at this time.