The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

New Reporting Requirements for the Mid-Atlantic Charter and Party Fleet

On March 12, 2018, new electronic reporting requirements become effective for vessels holding a mid-Atlantic charter and party permit on trips with passengers for hire. We are implementing new reporting requirements because of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Omnibus Electronic Vessel Trip Reporting Framework.

If a vessel has a federal charter or party permit for the species listed below as of March 12, it must:

- Submit vessel trip reports electronically (eVTR) for all for-hire trips through a NOAA-approved software application (see below for more information)
- Submit eVTRs within 48 hours following the completion of a fishing trip

This regulation will apply to all vessels with federal charter or party permits for any of the following species managed under a Mid-Atlantic Council Fishery Management Plan for trips with passengers for hire:

- Atlantic mackerel
- Squid
- Butterfish
- Summer Flounder
- Scup
- Black sea bass
- Bluefish
- Tilefish (golden and blueline)

eVTRs will make the collection of important data on fishing vessel activity more efficient, convenient, and timely for fishery managers and other data users. At present, vessel operators are required to submit paper-based reports on a monthly basis, which creates a delay between the time when fishing activity occurs and when the data are available to fisheries managers. Additionally, eVTRs may ease the reporting associated with fishing in multiple areas or creating duplicate reports, and can provide a convenient solution to the operator requirement to maintain VTRs for three years. It will also reduce human introduced errors that can result from submitting paper reports.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. When will this regulation take effect?

A. This action will take effect on March 12, 2018. All vessels issued one of the Mid-Atlantic Council's for-hire permits must submit eVTRs in compliance with these regulations for any for-hire trips taken on or after this date. We delayed implementation to give vessel owners and operators more time to obtain the software application and necessary training to comply with this regulation.

Q. Do eVTRs need to be completed prior to entering port?

A. Yes. The requirement to complete VTRs before returning to port will not change with this action.

Q. How can I submit my eVTRs? Where can I find out about NOAA-approved eVTR software applications?

A. These reports can be submitted through handheld electronic devices or via an online web portal on a personal computer. You can choose from several user-friendly, free or pay systems:

Tablet

- Free: (1) eTrips
- Pay: (1) eLog, (2) Olrac/Dynamic Data Logger, (3) FACTS

Personal Computer

- Free: (1) eTrips, (2) FLDRS
- Pay: (1) eLog*, (2) Olrac/Dynamic Data Logger, (3) FACTS

*eLog can also be used with a smartphone.

The GARFO website includes details and about these NOAA-approved eVTR software applications and contacts/support for eVTR problems. Search for "NOAA GARFO eVTR"

Q. What if I don't have an electronic device onboard my vessel that enables me to submit an eVTR at sea?

A: You must submit your VTR electronically, but if you do not have a suitable device onboard your vessel, you may continue to complete a paper VTR on the vessel and transcribe it into an eVTR once you are in port. You must submit the eVTR no more than 48 hours after entering port at the conclusion of each trip.

Q. I don't know how to complete and submit eVTRs. How can I get training?

A. There are several ways to learn about eVTRs:

- The Mid-Atlantic Council is coordinating additional training sessions on eVTR use and requirements.
- Our eVTR webpage (search NOAA GARFO eVTR) lists contact information for eVTR companies that can provide information on training for the approved software packages.
- The Council's eVTR webpage (http://www.mafmc.org/actions/evtr-framework) maintains a schedule of meetings and trainings on eVTR, as well as background documents that you may find helpful.
- Companies with approved systems will also provide online and/or in-person training on the use of their own eVTR systems.
- Your local GARFO port agent can provide some assistance as well.

Q. How will these changes benefit fishermen?

A. Long-term benefits of eVTRS include pre-populated data fields, the ability to create multiple reports, easy storage, and the elimination of mailing costs.

Q. Are fishermen in other regions, such as New England, affected by this regulation?

A. Yes, but only if they possess a Mid-Atlantic charter or party permit and are taking passengers on for-hire trips. If so, this regulation will apply to them regardless of where and for which species they are fishing.

Q. If I have a Federal charter or party permit for a Mid-Atlantic species, but I am fishing on a trip without taking passengers for hire, do I still have to submit an eVTR?

- No. When not on a trip with passengers for hire, you may submit an eVTR or a paper form submitted by mail. This applies to commercial trips as well as recreational trips with no paying passengers. You may continue submit these trips through an eVTR system if you choose.

For more information, contact Daniel Luers, Sustainable Fisheries Division, at 978-282-8457 or email at Daniel.Luers@noaa.gov

Fishermen Play Key Role in Fisheries Research

Scientific research is critical for improving fisheries science and management. Research is often a joint effort by a diverse set of stakeholders. In our region, fishermen play a vital role in developing and improving scientific research that informs fisheries management.

Cooperative research between fishery managers and fishermen is often focused on exploring alternative fishing strategies, gear modifications, and other approaches to improve fisheries operations. However, it also frequently focuses on expanding our understanding of more basic biological information. Scientists and their fishing industry partners seek to learn more about where fish are, how they are moving, and how their populations are changing. The answers to these questions can directly feed into the stock assessment process.

Exempted Fishing Permits and Scientific Letters of Acknowledgement exempt fishing vessels from certain federal regulations while the vessels are conducting research. Here are some examples of successful collaborative research projects conducted to improve data supporting fisheries management:

Recent Successes

From 2009 to 2015, commercial fishermen fished for and provided monkfish for study in a research project conducted by Crista Bank at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, School of Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) and funded through the Monkfish Research Set Aside (RSA) Program. The results of the study (Bank 2016), which examined the methods that scientists use to determine the age of individual monkfish, challenged assumptions made in previous stock assessments. The 2016 monkfish operational assessment was adjusted to account for these new findings.

In 2013, collaborators from the University of New England, the New England Aquarium, and Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, with the help of industry, conducted a study examining cod discard mortality in the Gulf of Maine recreational rod

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