

Virginia Seafood Sustainability

*A report requested by the
Virginia Marine Products Board*

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Virginia's commercial fisheries operate under regulations that are enforced by local, state, regional, and/or federal agencies and are designed to achieve sustainability.

How Are Sustainability Regulations and Limits Determined?

Regulations, limits, and best practices are backed by hard data. Data is gathered in a variety of ways, including from marine scientists and fishery managers as well as seafood producers who are required to provide information on their harvest levels and practices and are subject to operational monitoring to ensure compliance. With this information, various regulatory agencies can analyze the overall fishing effort and stock conditions and implement regulations and limits for maintaining sustainable stocks.

What Kind of Sustainability Regulations and Limits Are Used?

Fishery regulatory agencies use a variety of tools to achieve sustainability, including many of the same tools used by private sustainability certifiers. Such regulatory tools include Fishery Management Plans (FMP) to sustain harvests and rebuild stock sizes fallen below scientifically derived target sustainability levels and restrictions on fishing seasons, fish size, days at sea, and gear. As you can see in the table on the next page that summarizes the sustainability measures used in Virginia's primary fisheries, many fish species are regulated using several of these tools.

What Agencies Regulate Virginia's Fisheries?

Virginia's marine fisheries are managed by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC), which works with regional and federal authorities to regulate fish that migrate across state boundaries. Other agencies include:

- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provides law enforcement at the harvest and wholesale distribution levels, enforces regulations that ensure the chain of custody of seafood products is documented with harvesters and seafood dealers, and monitors highly migratory fish that inhabit federal waters.
- Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) oversees interstate fishery management plans (FMP) for fish that migrate in and out of Virginia waters.
- Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) regulates and manages fish that primarily inhabit offshore waters (more than 3 miles off the Virginia coast).
- New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) co-manages some important seafood products in Virginia, such as the Atlantic Sea Scallop, with MAFMC.

¹This document was prepared by Thomas Murray and Christopher Petrone, Marine Advisory Service, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, College of William & Mary. VIMS Marine Resource Report No. 2011-1.

Summary of Sustainability Measures for Some Virginia Marine Fishery Products²

Common Name (<i>Scientific name</i>)	Most local FMP	Size Limit	Quota	Gear Limits	Seasonal closures	Overfishing Mid-Atlantic?
Black Sea Bass (<i>Centropristis striata</i>)	Virginia	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Bluefish (<i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i>)	Virginia		Y	N	N	N
Butterfish (<i>Peprilus triacanthus</i>)	MidAtlantic					N
Crab, blue (<i>Callinectes sapidus</i>)	Virginia	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Crab, red (<i>Chaceon quinque-dens</i>)	Federal					N
Croaker (<i>Micropogonias undulates</i>)	Virginia					
Dogfish, spiny (<i>Squalus acanthias</i>)	MidAtlantic		Y	N	N	N
Eastern Oyster (<i>Crassostrea virginica</i>) – aquaculture	Virginia BMP		NA	Y	N	N
Eastern Oyster (<i>Crassostrea virginica</i>) – wild	Virginia	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA
Flounder, summer (<i>Paralichthys dentatus</i>)	MidAtlantic	Y	Y	N	N	N
Grey Trout, weakfish (<i>Cynoscion regalis</i>)	Virginia	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Hard Clam (<i>Mercenaria mercenaria</i>) – aquaculture	Virginia BMP	Y		Y	N	N
Hard Clam (<i>Mercenaria mercenaria</i>) – wild	None	Y	NA			NA
Monkfish/Goosefish (<i>Lophius americanus</i>)	MidAtlantic		Y	N	N	N
Scallop, sea (<i>Placopecten magellanicus</i>)	Federal	N	Y	Y	N	N
Spot (<i>Leiostomus xanthurus</i>)	Virginia					
Spotted Seatrout/Speckled Trout (<i>Cynoscion nebulosus</i>)	Atlantic States	Y	Y	N	N	
Striped Bass (<i>Morone saxatilis</i>)	Virginia	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Whelk, channeled (<i>Busycotypus canaliculatus</i>)	None	Y	Y	Y	N	

Resources

- Black Sea Bass, Bluefish, Butterfish, Dogfish (spiny), Flounder (summer), Monkfish/Goosefish - <http://www.mafmc.org/species/species.htm>
- Black Sea Bass, Bluefish, Butterfish, Dogfish (spiny), Flounder (summer), Monkfish/Goosefish - http://mafmc.org/MAFMC_Stock_Status_CURRENT.pdf
- Black Sea Bass, Bluefish, Butterfish, Dogfish (spiny), Flounder (summer), Monkfish/Goosefish, Scallop (sea), Crab (red) - http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/domes_fish/FMPS2.htm
- Black Sea Bass, Bluefish, Dogfish (spiny), Flounder (summer), Grey Trout (weakfish), Monkfish/Goosefish, Spotted Seatrout/Speckled Trout - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/commercialfinfishingrules.shtm>
- Bluefish - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/fr450.shtm>
- Bluefish, Croaker, Grey Trout (weakfish), Spot, Crabs (blue), Striped Bass, Eastern Oyster (wild) - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/fmac/fmoverview.shtm>
- Crab (blue) - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/fr300.shtm>
- Crab (blue) - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/fr270.shtm>
- Crab (red) - <http://www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/certified/north-west-atlantic/Atlantic-deep-sea-red-crab/Atlantic-deep-sea-red-crab>
- Crab (red) - <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/crd0902/Deep%20Sea%20red%20crab/Deep%20Sea%20red%20crab%20Text.pdf>
- Croaker, Grey Trout (weakfish), Spot, Spotted Seatrout/Speckled Trout, Striped Bass - <http://www.asafc.org/managedSpecies.htm>
- Dogfish (spiny) - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/fr490.shtm>
- Eastern Oyster (wild) - http://www.chesapeakebay.net/content/publications/cbp_12889.pdf
- Eastern Oyster (wild) - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/er720.shtm>
- Eastern Oyster (aquaculture) and Hard Clam (aquaculture) - http://web.vims.edu/adv/aqua/MRR%202008_10.pdf?svr=www
- Flounder (summer) - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/fr620.shtm>
- Grey Trout (weakfish) - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/fr380.shtm>
- Monkfish/Goosefish - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/fr1080.shtm>
- Scallop (sea) - http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/atl_sea_scallop.htm
- Spotted Seatrout/Speckled Trout - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/fr280.shtm>
- Striped Bass - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/fr252.shtm>
- Striped Bass - http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/atl_striped_bass.htm
- Whelk (channeled) - <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/regulations/fr890.shtm>

² Sources: N.O.A.A. National Marine Fisheries Service, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Virginia Marine Fisheries Commission.