

Trends

No Data Available

Legend:

▲ Increase,
 ▼ Decrease,
 ↔ Steady

Key Performance Areas

No Data Available

Productivity

No Data Available

Legend:

▲ Improving,
 ▼ Worsening,
 ↔ Maintaining

For more information on administrative key, and productivity measures, go to www.vaperforms.virginia.gov/agencylevel/index.cfm

Background & History

Established in 1875 as the Virginia Fish Commission, the Marine Resources Commission (MRC) is one of the oldest agencies in Virginia state government. The Commission manages saltwater fishing and associated habitat, for both recreational and commercial species. Commission staff work to create and maintain sustainable fisheries for the benefit of all anglers and the ecosystem. The Agency also manages water bottoms in public trust for the citizens of the Commonwealth. The Habitat Management Division works with citizens who wish to use water areas for piers or other water-dependent projects. All management activity must balance both public and private interests. The Law Enforcement Division, known as the Virginia Marine Police, patrols the waterways to enforce applicable laws and regulations, assists citizens in need, has Homeland Defense duties at the Ports of Hampton Roads and is part of the State's emergency preparedness team. Primary statutory authority for the Marine Resources Commission is found in Title 28.2 of the Code of Virginia, entitled Fisheries and Habitat of the Tidal Waters.

Primary Product & Services

Development of management and regulatory measures to enable both a sustainable and financially viable commercial and recreational marine fishery in the Commonwealth and to work to ensure that there is a fair and equitable allocation of all harvestable marine resources

Protection and regulation of the private use and development of the Commonwealth's coastal lands, including submerged lands, tidal wetlands and coastal primary sand dunes/beaches by maintaining a permit review process based on public interest reviews consistent with the Public Trust doctrine to fairly and timely balance private uses of State owned submerged lands and the need to preserve habitat

Administration of a private shellfish ground lease program

Restoration of Virginia's shellfish resource through construction and maintenance of public oyster beds, transplanting of seed oysters, management of the public oyster grounds and promotion of shellfish aquaculture

Maintenance of the surveys and maps required for public oyster grounds, the Virginia-Maryland border, leased shellfish grounds, condemned shellfish areas and seed/shell plant areas, tidal waterways and shorelines, and the 28,000 acres of un-granted marshes and meadowlands

Search, rescue and public safety, including marine radio communications and dispatch services and performance of homeland security responsibilities at the ports of Hampton Roads

Enforcement of commercial and recreational fisheries regulations at the highest levels in the Commonwealth by ensuring compliance with federal, state and interjurisdictional fishery management plans for marine fisheries, providing cooperative enforcement of federal programs on offshore fisheries and enforcing state and federal health and safety laws for marine species

Promotion of recreational fishing in the Commonwealth by administering an awards program recognizing trophy catches, public access improvement and other activities and by the construction and maintenance of artificial fishing reefs

Customer Base

The agency's customers include people employed in the commercial and recreational tidal fisheries industry, saltwater anglers, licensed commercial watermen, oyster ground leaseholders, recreational and commercial marine

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boat operators, all citizens who enjoy the Commonwealth's marine resources, tidal waterfront and riparian property owners, and other state, interstate and federal agencies, as well as some non-profit groups such as The Nature Conservancy and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

The agency's customer base has been increasing, particularly businesses and individuals requiring permits for encroachment over state owned lands and bottomlands, and those participating in, or employed in, the tidal recreational fishing industry in the Commonwealth.

While some of the agency's customers are aging, particularly those in the commercial seafood industry where the average age of a commercial waterman is now in the upper 50s, we do not believe that this significantly impacts the way the agency offers services to these customers.

Customer Listing

No Data Available

Key Agency Statistics

The following table provides a snapshot of the most recent key statistics related to agency operations.

Finances

Based on the budget passed by the 2013 Session of the General Assembly, the Marine Resources Commission (MRC) budget for 2012 - 2014 is \$21,388,758 in FY 2013 and \$23,212,218 in FY 2014. The increased appropriation in FY 2014 is due to additional general fund appropriation of \$1,823,460, which includes \$1,500,000 in funding for oyster restoration in the Commonwealth and funding for 4 positions in the Law Enforcement and Fisheries Management Divisions.

Non-GF revenues, from license sales, etc., now fund key agency regulatory and enforcements functions. Many personnel costs in Habitat are paid from Waterways Improvement Funds(WIF). License revenue is steady, but in the WIF, revenue is quite variable, with only 3 or 4 years of funding available to fund several permanent staff positions.

MRC expects significant federal budget reductions in future years as a result of economic decline. Federal monies for oyster restoration have already been eliminated. The Agency believes that the Law Enforcement Division will be most impacted by federal reductions.

Fund Sources

No Data Available

Revenue Summary Statement

Agency revenues have increasing importance as more core programs are supported by these revenues. In table above, Commonwealth Transportation Funds (CTF) are un-refunded motor fuel taxes for gasoline used in motor vessels, Dedicated Special Revenue (DSF) are Habitat permit and royalty fees, Federal Trust (FT) amounts are the best estimates of grant monies that come from the Department of Commerce and the Department of the Interior, and Special Fund (SF) revenues are monies from the sale of commercial and recreational saltwater fishing licenses.

Key Risk Factors

There are several agency responsibilities that remain underfunded and existing employees continue to absorb additional duties: State owned bottomlands above the Fall Line, Eastern Shore marshes, aquaculture, finance and contracting, search and rescue, patrol work,

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homeland defense, emergency preparedness, interstate and quota based fisheries management, and complex conservation efforts for an ever-increasing number of species. This additional workload will become more problematic as many long term employees with much institutional knowledge are expected to retire in the next 2-6 years.

The use of non-general fund (NGF) revenue from the sale of licenses, permit and dredge fees now replace General Fund (GF) dollars lost in budget reductions. Many key management and regulatory functions now depend on less stable sources of funding. This reduces the agency's ability to use these NGF for fishery research, surveys, monitoring, and stock assessments that provide the information to support MRC management and regulatory work that ensure Virginia's full compliance with fishery plans from the interstate regional fisheries management organizations.

The agency has lost all federal support for oyster restoration work and has lost federal monies that supported fisheries management and regulation work for decades, and is expecting other federal funding reductions in programs that support marine law enforcement and fisheries.

The agency also had a significant reduction in the Law Enforcement state budget that was not replaced with NGF support. In addition to the budget loss, the Agency's costs for fleet vehicles and gasoline have significantly increased. A Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) between VMRC and the National Marine Fisheries Service which has been in force for approximately the last 11 years provides the only stable source of funding for the agency Law Enforcement Division to purchase equipment, primarily boats, trailers, motors, and vehicles. Reductions in JEA funding are expected to take place in FY 2014 and beyond, that coupled with other budget reductions and increasing costs are causing reductions in service and jeopardizing the quality of the equipment needed by the Law Enforcement Division.

Performance Highlights

Blue crab stock is at its highest level in 20 years; the results of the 2012 Blue Crab Winter Dredge Survey determined the total population of blue crabs in the Chesapeake Bay reached 764 million. This was a 66 percent increase above the 2011 abundance level of 460 million crabs, and is the highest level recorded since 1993.

The 2011 Virginia oyster harvest was the largest since 1989. Over the past four years, the total oyster harvest – including privately leased oyster grounds and oyster farming operations – has grown from 95,000 bushels in 2008 to 236,000 bushels in 2011. That's an increase in dockside value from \$3.5 million to \$8.2 million in just the past four years. The total harvest is projected to increase to roughly 250,000 bushels by the end of 2012. Current estimates are that 320,000 bushels of oysters will be harvested in 2013. If this estimate is accurate, this will be the largest oyster harvest in the Commonwealth in 25 years.

In July 2012, the Commission lowered the recreational striped bass possession limit for the fall's Bay striped bass season, allowing anglers to keep more of the fish they catch. Striped bass is a prized sport fish for recreational anglers.

In February 2013, the Commission lowered the recreational flounder size limit for the fourth year in a row, allowing anglers to keep more of the fish they catch. The 2013 flounder size limit is 16 inches, with a four fish daily possession limit. The 2012 possession limit was 16.5 inches with a four fish possession limit. Flounder are also a prized sport fish for recreational anglers.

The Virginia Marine Police was issued perfect marks in 2010, 2011 and 2012 by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration for its outstanding enforcement of shellfish harvesting rules and regulations ensuring that Virginia oysters meet all applicable safety laws and regulations and as such do not endanger the oysters' end consumers.

The increase in the bushel amounts of oysters being available and harvested has called for extreme vigilance by the Marine Police to deal with an epidemic of oyster poaching. In 2011 and 2012 the Marine Police issued 341 summonses relating to oysters, nearly three times the summons issued in the prior two years. These increased enforcement efforts will continue into this biennium.

Performance Measures

Management Discussion & Analysis

General Information about the Ongoing Status of the Agency

The agency places great emphasis on the review of its regulatory programs and will continue to focus on minimizing regulatory burden that inhibits normal business operations.

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The Marine Resources Commission (MRC) expects increased involvement of federal and interstate organizations in the resource management process, with a trend toward increased fishery regulations and resource data collection and monitoring in a multispecies ecosystem context which will require substantially more science and information than is currently available. Of particular interest will be new regional management guidance on the taking of menhaden, which may pose significant financial hardship for the Commonwealth, as well as recommendations on blue crabs, sturgeon, and sea mammals.

The MRC will continue its efforts to restore Virginia's oyster resources and to work with increasing aquaculture activities for various shellfish species.

The Marine Police expect an increased responsibility for homeland defense at the Ports of Hampton Roads, as well as continued search and rescue work and 24 hour, 7 day a week coverage of the waterways served by MRC. As the Virginia's oyster resource continues to improve, there will be a growing need for the protection of that resource from poaching from public waters and condemned shellfish areas. The Virginia Marine Police will place a priority on enforcement in these areas.

For Habitat Management, the number of requests for habitat permits is expected to grow commensurate with population increases and development in Tidewater, generating an increased need to balance both the public and the private interests of the marine resources of the state.

Information Technology

The Commission has been rebuilding its suite of business applications in a web based development environment for seven years and at the beginning of 2012, completed its rebuild of all applications. Completion of application renovation tasks has provided the agency with more opportunity to offer additional citizen web access to agency data and business applications.

All agency IT activities are very modest out of financial necessity, and are always directly aligned with the agency mission, goals, and objectives. We believe our low cost approach to application development has business value primarily in operational efficiency and attainment of strategic goals of the Agency, but in doing so they also contribute to improving and maintaining constituent service levels in an era of increasing demands and relatively limited personnel.

As of March 2012, stable funding for full participation in the VITA-NG Partnership has been worked out by the addition of \$280,000 to the agency base budget. The IT changes planned for the next biennium are enhancements or desired functionality that will be added using primarily in-house staff. The agency does not anticipate any IT investments beyond in-house staff, a small shellfish survey mapping project, and VITA Service Fees during the upcoming 2012-2014 budget biennium.

Workforce Development

The VMRC has quite a number of long term employees who have an impressive amount of institutional knowledge and understanding of agency policies and history. Approximately 52% of VMRC staff are 50 years or older and 25% of the agency staff has more than 20 years of State Service. About 18% of current staff are eligible for an unreduced retirement and 3 of these staff are top managers of agency programs. Over the next five years, 34.3% of the agency workforce will be eligible for an unreduced retirement. This percentage includes most of the top administrators of agency programs at VMRC.

Staffing in the Fishery Management, Law Enforcement Division and Administration and Finance Division has been impacted by turnover and vacancies. Competitive salaries offered other local, state and federal positions contribute to this turnover. Budget still impedes the agency's ability to deal with these continuing compensation issues and we continue to work to find creative ways to deal with this situation.

VMRC has worked diligently to ensure that succession planning is in place so that the functions done by these key management positions and long-time employees can continue without any disruption to agency staff and clients. Loss of highly competent workforce will be significant, however in most divisions there do currently exist well-trained staff who could, with some training, make a smooth transition into the positions of those that will be leaving.

Physical Plant

With the exception of the agency owned Marine Police Operations Station at the Newport News Small Boat Harbor, the Commission leases all office space through a centralized state leasing program. In 2012, the Commission renewed its leasing agreement for the agency headquarters in Newport News.