

2016 Commercial Yellow Perch Fishery

Pilot Reporting/Tagging Program

Maryland Department of Natural Resources intends to offer the 2016 Commercial Yellow Perch Permit holders a modified tagging and reporting system for the upcoming 2016 season. The Department will launch a voluntary pilot program that maintains harvest accountability and timely reporting. Signing up for this pilot program will enable commercial yellow perch fishermen to use box tags on their catch instead of tagging individual yellow perch and will make reporting more efficient for harvesters. Briefly, the pilot program will utilize a hail-out/hail-in procedure only on days that permit holders go fishing. In addition, daily harvest totals will be submitted electronically once the fish are weighed. Fishermen enrolled in the pilot will not have to pay for their box tags.

Fishermen not enrolling in the yellow perch pilot program will still have to tag individual fish and use the daily call-in system, even on days they do not fish. In addition, non-pilot participants will be charged \$0.02 per tag.

The declaration period for the 2016 commercial season remains the same. All those wishing to harvest yellow perch commercially will have to declare their intent by October 30th, 2015. In early November, all yellow perch declarees will be invited to a meeting detailing the procedures of the electronic reporting/hailing software known as FACTS and will be given details about box tagging requirements. All yellow perch fishermen will have until November 30th, 2015 to enroll in the pilot program.

During the month of December, DNR staff will hold FACTS training sessions for yellow perch pilot users and others. It will be most efficient to schedule sessions in groups. Anyone not trained by December 31st, 2015 will be required to complete the daily call-in and individual tagging. A more definitive schedule of training can be discussed during the early-November meeting.

