



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 800

Aquaculture Leases - Marking and Recording Requirements - Mobile Application

Date: February 17, 2021

Position: **SUPPORT**

To: House Environment and
Transportation Committee

From: Dr. Allison Colden
Maryland Fisheries Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 800 which would require the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a mobile phone application for determining a user's real time location relative to important regulatory areas and equipment. Such an application would aid all users of the Bay in understanding the rules and regulations that apply to the areas in which they are recreating or engaging in commercial harvest.

A clear understanding of geographic delineations of fishing laws is integral to compliance

Maryland's fishing laws include many important geographic delineations which prohibit or permit certain fishing activities in certain areas. These geographic delineations function to conserve and protect important fisheries habitats, like underwater grasses and restored oyster reefs, to indicate areas of the Bay bottom that have been leased from the state, or to protect public health by preventing harvest of seafood from polluted waters. The violation of regulations and laws associated with these areas can carry hefty fines or result in penalties as serious as a lifetime revocation of an individual's commercial or recreational fishing privileges. A clear understanding of the rules is fundamental to compliance.

A mobile application could provide a quick, easy way to orient fishermen to relevant laws and regulations

The importance of these management areas for resources conservation and the possibility of steep penalties for violating their rules underscores the need for an easy way for users to understand their geographic location and the regulations that they may be subject to in that area. The mobile application proposed in HB 800 would provide users of the Chesapeake Bay with a quick, easy way to find their location, determine if they are within a special management area, and understand the prohibitions or special protections that pertain to that area.

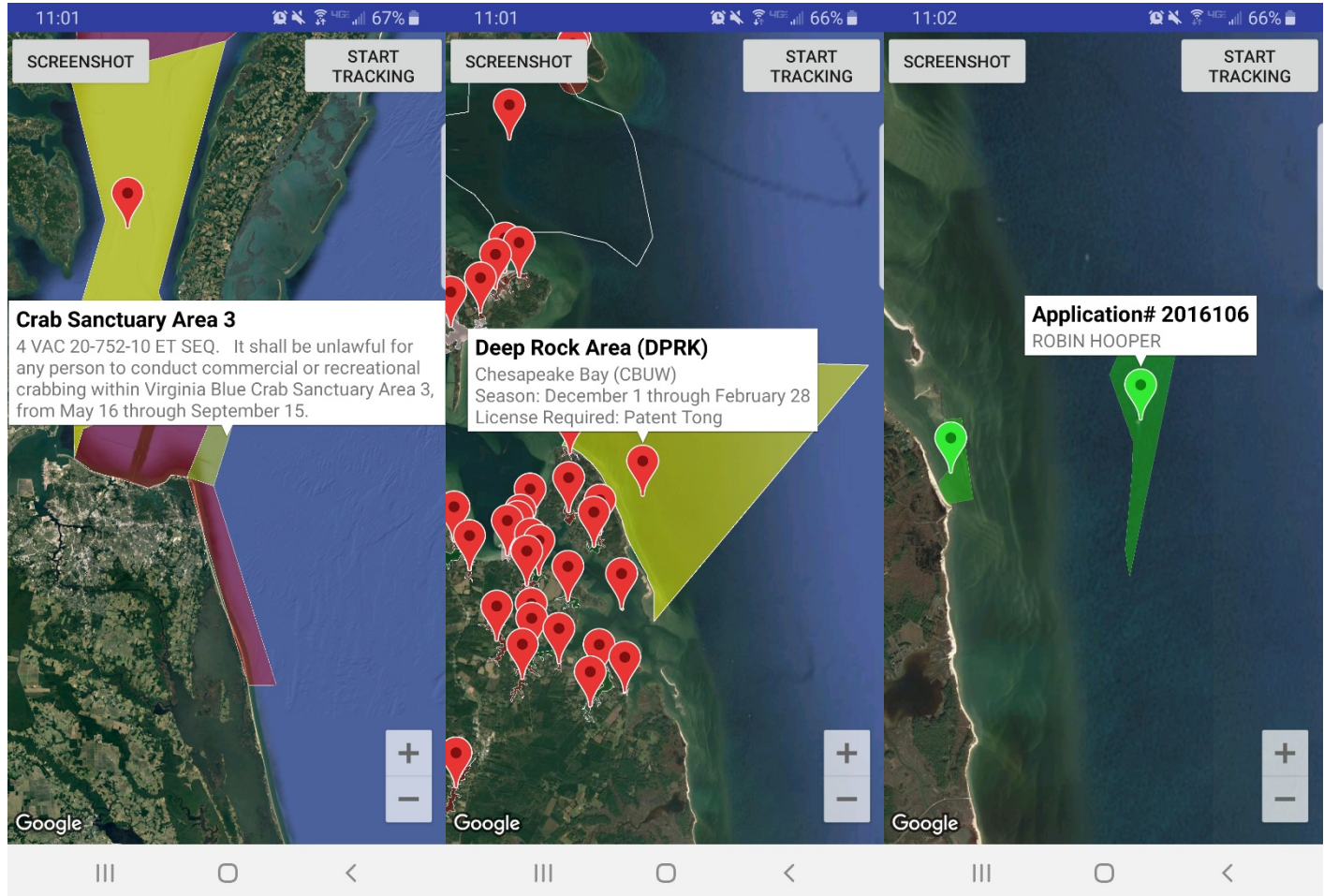
Virginia's mobile app, VMRC Maps, is a positive example of the potential for a Maryland-based app

Virginia has had a similar mobile navigation application, called VMRC Maps, for over five years. The VMRC Maps application allows users to see artificial reef sites, oyster harvest areas, clamming grounds, fixed fishing devices, oyster lease grounds, among others. It allows the user to enable real-time tracking of their location using their device's built in GPS. Clicking on a management area in the app brings up a pop-up window describing the actions that are allowed or prohibited in that area and the type of license required to fish legally in that area.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403
Phone (410) 268-8816 • Fax (410) 280-3513

Development of a similar app for Maryland recreational anglers, watermen, and other users of the Bay would provide greater clarity on the location and regulations of special management areas and increase effectiveness of enforcement of Maryland's natural resources laws.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 800.



Screenshots from the Virginia VMRC Maps mobile application. From left: Location of a blue crab spawning sanctuary area indicating dates of closure; location of an open oyster harvest area indicating dates open to harvest and gear type allowed; location of a proposed oyster aquaculture lease with lease applicant name and application reference number.

For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.