



VMRC NEWS

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Commercial Crabbers to Receive Federal Aid Within Several Weeks

NEWPORT NEWS, VA. (October 9, 2003) –Virginia’s share of federal blue crab disaster relief funds will be dispersed to qualified commercial crabbers within the next several weeks, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission announced today (Thursday).

Virginia received \$1,210,077 of the \$5 million authorized by the U.S. Congress earlier this year. Other states in the program are New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina and South Carolina.

The federal action allowed each state to determine how its grant funds would be distributed. The funds could go only to four specific areas: direct assistance to watermen, assistance to small businesses, domestic product marketing, and state seafood testing programs. The decision to select Virginia’s watermen to receive these grants was made by William A. Pruitt, Commissioner of Marine Resources and W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr., Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources.

Approximately 1,500 watermen, who are licensed crabbers that qualify for the payment, will receive checks in the mail, probably before the end of the month. The federal funds have been received by the Commonwealth and are now being processed. Individual checks should be mailed very soon, Pruitt said.

Virginia’s assistance program has been divided into two tiers. Those watermen whose prior records indicate they harvested a total of more than 2,500 pounds from 2000-2002 will receive a check for \$802.61, while those whose harvest was less than 2,500 pounds will receive \$292.89.

In 2002 Virginia watermen landed about 28 million pounds of crabs, the second lowest catch since 1994 and about 3 million pounds below the 1994-2001 average.

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