

Virginia Fishery Resource Grant Program

Request for Applications

<https://www.vims.edu/map/frg>

Applications will be accepted until SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

The Marine Advisory Program (MAP) at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) is accepting applications to compete for funding as part of the Virginia Fishery Resource Grant Program (VFRGP). The Virginia Legislature created the Fishery Resource Grant Program to “protect and enhance the Commonwealth’s coastal fishery resource through the awarding of grants” in four areas, listed below.

A basic principle of the VFRGP is that people in the industry often have valid ideas for enhancing and protecting fisheries, but they lack the financial resources to experiment with innovations. The VFRGP invests in ideas generated by the fishing public through fair and competitive methods.

All applications submitted within the limits of the Guidelines for Submission will be accepted and reviewed for technical merit and the ability to address one or more of the specific priorities listed.

Priority Areas

New Marine Fisheries Equipment or Gear – This priority area seeks applications that focus on the development of environmentally friendly fishing, methods to reduce bycatch, improvements in gear selectivity, more effective ways to handle catch and the development of information to inform fishery management plans for key species and groups.

Environmental Pilot Studies on issues including water quality and fisheries habitat– This priority area seeks applications that focus on ways to restore damaged habitat, create new habitat, prevent habitat impairment or reduce impact from fishing or aquaculture activities.

Aquaculture or Mariculture of marine-dependent species – This priority area seeks applications that focus on ways to develop criteria and assessment for permits, increase return from investment in culture activities or introduce new species to the existing aquaculture list to broaden the participation in commercial aquaculture.

Seafood Technology and Utilization – This priority area seeks applications that develop value-added products from existing production, the utilization of underused or new fishery resources, develop models for total quality system management programs or increase returns in the seafood industry by improving packaging and handling.

Eligibility

To be eligible for funding under the VFRGP, each application must substantially involve Virginians who are actively involved in the fishing industry (defined as persons involved in commercial activities relating to fishery resources, aquaculture or the processing or handling fishery products). Applications submitted by persons not involved in a fishing industry must have 1) substantial involvement of Virginia fishers as defined above and 2) written endorsements from persons or organizations representing fishing industries supporting the project. Members of the project team must have the proper fishery licenses in place to conduct the work proposed, and have the ability to obtain any additional permits needed for the work.

Application Development

Competitive applications are developed through discussions of ideas and partnering with interested groups and experts. Every applicant should consult with experts in the targeted priority area(s) and, where appropriate, assemble a team of fishers and scientists to conduct the work. VIMS MAP specialists can help assemble a team. Non-fishers could improve chances of funding by collaborating with persons in a fishing industry for proposal development and design and by involving fishers in the execution of the study. VIMS MAP will be responsible for determining the eligibility of each application.

Application Forms

The application form at the end of this notice provides an outline for the proposal and additional pages should be used for providing information in the sections listed. Applicants should pay particular attention to items 12-17. These sections should describe the problem and rationale for proposing the research project (12), present the goals and objectives and the proposed work (13) and describe the work that is to be performed to meet the objectives (14). The next three sections should explain how the information gained from the work will help resolve the problem described (15), how the information developed will be transferred to others (16); please note that it is not enough to say the data will be given to VMRC or another agency) and who will be responsible for doing the work (17); letters confirming participation should be obtained from all cooperators.

Reach out to frgadmin@vims.edu to schedule a consultation to learn more about the grant program, eligibility requirements and funding priorities, how to complete the application form and where to go for more help when developing a grant proposal package.

Application Submission

To be considered for funding in this solicitation, a signed application must be delivered or postmarked no later than 5:00 pm, September 25, 2026. Mailed copies should be sent to: VFRGP/Marine Advisory Program, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, P.O. Box 1346, Gloucester Point, VA 23062. Applications will be accepted via email to frgadmin@vims.edu, and must have received a confirmed receipt by the deadline. **No applicant may submit more than 2 applications for this cycle.**

Application Review

To ensure a competitive project selection process, VFRGP will evaluate all applications in two ways. A technical review will be conducted by a panel of experts from outside of Virginia and the VFRGP Advisory Board (see appended list of Advisory Board members) will evaluate and select applications for funding. The Advisory Board will consider the technical reviews and evaluate applications with respect to: a) how well the application addresses the priority; b) the ability to protect or enhance fishery resources; c) organization of a work plan leading to conclusions; d) the plan to extend findings to the fishing industry; e) availability of expertise and its application; f) familiarity and experience with the problem addressed; g) innovation of approach and/or potential findings; h) cost-effectiveness of implementation of results; and i) reasonableness of the budget for the work proposed. The VFRGP will make application selection decisions and funding agreements will generally be effective during the second calendar quarter of 2027.

Funding Priorities

The following list of potential research ideas has been reviewed and approved by the VFRGP Advisory Board and is provided as **suggestions** of the types of subjects that could be appropriate for proposals to the VFRGP. These are not intended as a complete listing of all possible projects; nor are the topics listed in order of importance. All applications received by the submission deadline will receive equal treatment during the review process.

Potential research topics or issues include but are not limited to the following:

I. New Fisheries Equipment and Gear -

1. Reduce bycatch by technology development and education.
2. Develop “environmentally friendly” gear.
3. Develop more effective/efficient mechanisms for handling catch.
4. Develop and evaluate mechanisms to release fish to increase their survival.
5. Determine amounts of hook-and-release mortality for important recreational species.
6. Increase efficiency/economic return of fishing.
7. Develop bait and bait substitutes.
8. Develop species-specific gear.
9. Develop information leading to Fishery Management Plans for key species and groups.
10. Develop new gear and/or improve current gear and/or document catch per unit effort
11. Develop gear to improve selectivity of target species.
12. Increase use of vessel tracking devices in data-limited fisheries. *Priority given to applications that collaborate with VMRC to pilot vessel tracking in fisheries with limited data, such as the shrimp trawl, electrofishing, oyster, or conch fisheries.*
13. Develop video observation systems to quantify bycatch in fisheries with limited or no monitoring. *Priority given to applications that collaborate with VMRC to develop methods to identify and quantify bycatch through video observations in fisheries with limited or no monitoring (i.e., purse seine, shrimp trawl, electrofishing, haul seines, pound nets, hook and line, crab pots, etc.)*

14. Explore new harvest methods for experimental fisheries. *Priority given to applications that collaborate with VMRC to pilot different methods to harvest shrimp in the Bay (other than trawling). Channel nets may be a viable method, but data collection is needed to make this determination.*

II. Environmental Pilot Studies

1. Develop mechanisms to restore damaged habitat or create new habitat.
2. Develop mechanisms to prevent habitat impairment.
3. Reduce habitat impact from fishing activities.
4. Develop recycling and collection programs for used fishing or aquaculture gear.
5. Develop ways to monitor and evaluate habitat alterations.
6. Determine environmental impact of fishing, processing, or aquaculture activities.
7. Assess effects of water quality and habitat alteration on fisheries production.

III. Aquaculture / Mariculture

1. Increase return from investment including the development of mechanical planting and harvesting technologies.
2. Examine the potential for culture of new species.
3. Improve the efficiency of growth, feeding and nutrition.
4. Demonstrate the best husbandry practices for potential growers.
5. Market research for aquaculture products.
6. Develop parameters for apprentice program and training for career aquaculturists.
7. Assess feasibility of augmenting commercially and recreationally important species through hatchery release.
8. Assess regulations that impact aquaculture/mariculture such as submerged aquatic vegetation protection.
9. Assess the potential of shellfish aquaculture to enhance wild populations.
10. Provide the opportunity for watermen to diversify their businesses through aquaculture.

IV. Seafood Technology and Utilization

1. Develop value-added products from existing or potential production.
2. Increase returns in the seafood industry by improving packaging and handling.
3. Develop models for total quality system management programs.
4. Develop improvements in product quality.
5. Spiny Dogfish Fishery Infrastructure Support

Application Development Contacts

If you have an idea for a project, you may contact the following VIMS MAP specialists for assistance in writing your proposal or to request additional information. These people can also direct you to a research scientist who has expertise related to your project topic.

VIMS MAP contacts include:

David Rudders	804-684-7531	MAP Associate Director, FRG Program Manager
Karen Hudson	804-684-7742	FRG Program Coordinator, Shellfish Aquaculture
Shelby White	804-684-7345	FRG Program Coordinator, Marine Business Specialist

Program Administration and Advisory Board Contacts

Program Administration

VFRGP Manager: Dr. David Rudders, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Marine Advisory Program, Associate Director
804-684-7531 / rudders@vims.edu

Advisory Board

Virginia Marine Resources Commission: Adam Tomlin, Waterman's Apprentice Program
948-229-1570 / adam.tomlin@mrc.virginia.gov

Virginia Institute of Marine Science: Dr. David Rudders, Assistant Dean of Research and Advisory Services
804-684-7531 / rudders@vims.edu

Aquaculture Industry: Executive Director, Shellfish Growers of Virginia (SGV)

Watermen's Associations:

Marshall Cox
757-373-2990 / mrscox2711@earthlink.net

Pete Nixon
804-466-8940 / pdnixon1950@gmail.com

Nathan Everett, Still Kickin' Seafood
252-945-2757 / stillkickinseafood42@gmail.com

Virginia Fishery Resource Grant Program

Application

1. Project title: _____
2. Name of applicant: _____
3. Company (if applicable): _____
4. Telephone: _____
5. Mailing Address: _____

6. Priority addressed by project (see list): _____
7. Fishing license/permit number(s): _____
8. Social Security (last 4 digits) or Federal Tax ID number: _____
9. Funding requested: _____
10. Project dates: start _____ end _____
11. Other project participant(s), affiliation, address and phone:

[Note: Use additional pages as needed to respond to the items below.]

12. Give a brief summary of the situation or problem to be addressed.

13. What is the purpose (objectives) of the project?
14. What work do you intend to do, and how do you plan to accomplish it?
15. Explain how the expected results will address the problem and/or enhance fishery resources.
16. Explain how the expected results will be made available to the fishing industry.
17. Briefly outline who will be responsible for each aspect of the work plan (attach letters from cooperators outlining their participation).
18. Briefly summarize the qualifications of each participant.
19. Provide project budget and cost justification.

CATEGORY	AMOUNT REQUESTED	AMOUNT PROVIDED IN-KIND
PERSONNEL Time in hours/days/trips * unit cost <i>Note - \$20 / hr is the cap for fishing activity and \$15 / hr for data entry</i>		
TRAVEL Trip/mileage * unit cost		
SUPPLIES		
EQUIPMENT Items more than \$500 each		
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES Itemize and use the going hourly rate for the trade		
OTHER Itemize		
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS		

20. Provide budget item justification and/or explanations. *Note: brick and mortar costs are not eligible*

Applicant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Virginia Fishery Resource Grant Program Application Guidelines

1. Provide a title that summarizes the project.
2. Give the full name of the applicant; it will be used to issue payments for the project.
3. Give the name of your company or corporation if applicable, or the institution of your employment. If self-employed, say so.
4. Applicant's complete telephone number including area code.
5. Mailing address for correspondence and mailing payments, etc.
6. Which priority are you addressing? The attached listing gives this year's priorities under the four-program areas equipment/gear, environment, aquaculture and seafood.
7. Give fishing license or permit number(s) that authorize you to do the work proposed, if applicable. Also denote additional permits needed to do the proposed work that you do not yet possess, but will be applying for (if applicable).
8. Social security or federal ID number is required for grant payments. For the application purpose, the last 4 digits of a social security number will suffice.
9. Total amount of funding requested (see budget section).
10. Give the date that you plan to begin work and the date that we can expect a completion report.
11. List all other personnel involved in the project and their affiliation. This includes all those who have a major responsibility for some aspect of the work.

****Use additional pages as needed to fully answer items 12 through 18****

12. Describe the nature of the situation or problem that your proposed work will address.
13. What is the purpose of your proposed work?
14. **This section is very important!** Please explain how, where and when you will conduct each work task (the statement of work). Explain how tests will be run and how the data will be analyzed. Describe the tests you plan to conduct, the surveys you will make and/or plans for making something. Your methodology must withstand questions about its validity and/or potential to yield the results you need to solve the purpose of your work (described in number 13 above).

15. Describe how the outcome of your proposed work will help address the problem described in number 12.
16. Describe how you plan to get the results of your work to other members of the fishing industry for their use. It is not enough to just discover something. It must also be usable. If you are going to rely on someone else to extend the results, be sure to have an agreement and arrange to cover those expenses.
17. Who is going to be responsible for each component of the statement of work? Each participant (including the applicant) must be responsible for some part of the work. You must have letters of endorsement from other participants to confirm their participation in the project. For example, if personnel from VIMS will conduct the statistical analysis, then an agreement letter from VIMS is required.
18. Give a brief statement describing the experience of each participant and the applicant that qualifies them to do the tasks outlined above.
19. Carefully compute the funds needed (rounded to the nearest dollar) for all the work described in the proposal and enter under the column “funds requested”. The column entitled “fund provided in-kind” is to account for the costs you are providing at no charge, which can be equipment, travel expenses, personnel time, etc. Be sure to include any subcontractors for lab work, consultants, extension, services, etc. The funding for these grants does not permit indirect costs (overhead). Be sure to check your budget total figure.
20. Please justify the budget figures. For example: “We will need a deckhand for 150 hours @ \$10/hour,” or “We will need to design and build a trawl that requires \$1,200 for materials,” etc.
Note: \$20 / hr is the Program cap for fishing activity and \$15/ hr for data entry.
 - **Be sure to sign the application.** Applications without a dated signature will be rejected as incomplete.
 - **Mail the signed original to:** VFRGP/Marine Advisory Program, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, P.O. Box 1346, Gloucester Point, VA 23062. Applications must be postmarked no later than **SEPTEMBER 25, 2026**. Late applications will be returned to the applicant without being considered.
 - **Email the signed application:** Signed applications may also be emailed as an attachment to frgadmin@vims.edu, however emailed applications must have confirmed receipt before the deadline. The Program is not responsible for technical glitches that could lead to an application not being received on time.
 - If you need assistance completing the grant application or have any questions, please reach out to frgadmin@vims.edu or 804-684-7742.
 - More information and forms are available at this website: <https://www.vims.edu/map/frg>.