



## An Antiquated System Goes Down without the Ships

The College of William & Mary is home to 35 floating, mobile classrooms – more commonly known as boats. The school's Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) offers a unique education that includes research projects throughout Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the United States. In addition to exploring the overall ecology of the bay, students take part in an annual shark survey, the bay-wide Blue Crab Winter Dredge Survey and a multitude of other research opportunities right on – and often in – the water. But just like its landlocked learning spaces, the college's fleet needed an efficient scheduling and reservation system.

"Prior to EMS, if you wanted to schedule a boat you went online to a calendar system, it wasn't a reservation system. It wasn't really checking to see what was available," said Susan Maples, VIMS event coordinator.

This setup created confusion, duplicate data entry, and a slew of last minute cancellations.

"You had people reserving boats for many dates to make sure they'd have boats available for the day they needed them," Maples said.

Once a researcher's request was approved by staff, all of the reservation information – boat assigned, captain, contact information, trip plan, additional supplies needed, launch ramp, research site location – needed to be manually copied into VIMS' mostly paper system.

"We'd have to do all that work again," Maples said. "The process had to be streamlined."

She wanted VIMS staff shuffling less paperwork, and the system's end-users to enter the initial boat reservation (with all the details) directly into a centralized system. Maples also saw EMS' potential to consolidate billing, capture schedule revisions and produce reports documenting how much each vessel was used.

"Even though all of this documentation was already being done, little of the information was being captured in a central location. You'd ask, 'How many times did a particular boat go out last month?' (VIMS staff) would have to go to the file and count the reservations. Obviously, we had a problem." Maples said. "We needed some help."

### Fast Facts

- **35** boats scheduled using EMS
- Small vessels were reserved for **62 different projects** between June and September
- **939** bookings made last season

# EMS Case Study *College of William & Mary's Institute of Marine Science, Virginia*

## EMS Floats VIMS Vessels

William & Mary may be the second-oldest higher education institution in the U.S., but the college wasn't shy about the innovative approach to using EMS to streamline boat scheduling. The school was using EMS in the colleges of business, law and education; taking the scheduling software to the water was the next step. The easiest way to track, schedule and assign resources to VIMS' variety of boats was to treat each as its own floating classroom.

"We were able to do it electronically with less paper and web-based," Maples said. "Revisions are great because often boats are having maintenance done and for the people on the back-end, you can just click and drag to move that reservation to another boat and every detail just moves along with it."

The different departments that take out boats daily and hourly now have a simple, flexible online form to fill out, picking an available boat that suits their needs and requesting the necessary equipment for their research – all through EMS. The VIMS scheduling staff simply has to approve the request.

Students and professors who need to take a boat out for research activities like a shoreline study get more information about what is available down to the last detail. By simply clicking on a boat in the system, the vessel's photo, capacity and weight are shown. It only takes another short series of clicks to reserve the vessel, a qualified captain, a trailer or any other necessary resource for each voyage.

In addition to the daily convenience the EMS system offers users on both the front and back ends, VIMS now has the ability to run reports in EMS and build an archive of boat usage and detailed project histories. The school can run a wide range of queries, such as how much a particular boat was used in a given time frame or which research projects needed the most boating hours.

"It's much easier. We do the reports more frequently and more accurately because of EMS," Maples said.

The VIMS-EMS scheduling system supported 62 research projects in its initial year. During the June-September season, 939 bookings were made in EMS.

The scheduling software proved to be flexible enough to flourish in an unconventional, aqua-centric academic space – no matter what type of report, research project or educational expedition the school wanted to schedule and track.

Whether the VIMS researchers are identifying threatened shark species or determining the roll underground water plays in the bay's ecosystem, EMS ensures scheduling processes are shipshape.

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