



Reported by Brie Jackson

## **Workers May Not Return to Md. Seafood Industry**

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**HOOPER'S ISLAND**, Md. - Local crabbers say they've run into a shortage of seasonal workers. The government has already issued it's limit of 66,000 H2-B visas which means that some workers might not return to the Maryland seafood industry.

"We have not gotten our visa's, we've been approved but the cap was met at 66,000 so there are no visas available for Dorchester County or the state of Maryland," said crab house owner Jay Newcomb.

Newcomb says if that doesn't change, Maryland will lose hundreds of crabbers, boaters and pickers. Many crab house owners say that means not enough crabs will be processed.

Some in the seafood industry say that could mean trouble. Crab house owner Janet Ruark, says last year watermen in North Carolina didn't get enough visas.

"They had no market for the crabs in North Carolina, which drove the price of the crabs down. So the watermen didn't get what they generally had gotten the year before because of the overflow of crabs that were on the market. So it just brings the price down," said Ruark.

Ruark says that may be good for people who want to buy crabs but it hurts the seafood industry. Lawmakers introduced a bill that would exempt returning seasonal workers from counting against the national cap.