

MINUTES

SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SMAC) MEETING

JULY 19, 2017

Members Present

John DeMaria
Tommy Kellum
Lake Cowart
J C Hudgins
Tommy Leggett
Dan Dise
Ben Johnson
Ernest George
Jackie Shannon
Tommy Leggett

Members Absent

Richard Green
Kevin Wade
Richard Harding
Wayne France
Don Porter

VMRC/VIMS Staff

Andrew Button
Robert O'Reilly
Ben Stagg
Vernon Rowe
Vas Dunston
Casey Springfield
Missy Southworth
Kathy Leonard
Adam Kenyon

and others.

Robert O'Reilly was the chairman in absence of Wayne France and opened the meeting at 4 p.m.

Andrew Button, Head Conservation and Replenishment, reviewed the stock assessment data and harvest data for information to the committee members.

He reviewed three possible harvest seasons scenarios for the members to consider:

The first version being the Status Quo Season, other than the area changes due to the rotational strategy used in the Rappahannock River, Pocomoke-Tangier Sounds, and York River the rest was the same. The areas in the rotational were in the Rappahannock River, which meant Area 1 and Area 6 were to be opened for this season, York River, Area 1 was to be opened, and Pocomoke-Tangier Sounds Area 1 was to be opened.

The next version being referred to as the Tong Season, the same was true about the rotational areas, areas were proposed to allow for patent tong gear harvest and there were additions or changes in the harvest areas. The proposal was to allow patent tongs in Area 1 of the Rappahannock River for the month of October and in Area 6 in the month of October to allow hand tong and patent tong in the month of November, with two months of hand scrapes in December and January, Area 7 to be allowed to harvest with hand tongs in the month of October and two months of hand scrape in January and February. In the Great Wicomico the gear would be limited to hand tong instead of the hand scrape in November and December. In the Pocomoke Sound in the Saxis area, PGs 9 and 10 would be opened to hand tong, October through

November and in the Tangier Sound, Cod Harbor would be opened to hand tong, October through November. The rest of the recommendations were for status quo.

The third version referred to as the Scrape Season involved expanding the rotational strategies to additional water bodies. The first was the James River Hand Scrape areas would be divided into Areas 1 and 2, with three-month season each. Area 1 would be December through February and Area 2 would be October through December. The second additional area for the rotational strategies was the Great Wicomico River, which would split into Areas 1 and 2 and Area 1 would be opened this year from December through January. The Mobjack Bay-Pultz Bar area would be opened for hand tong in October and Hand Scrape in November. Everywhere else was status quo.

The biggest concern for the patent tong being allowed in areas which were normally opened to hand scrape would be the impact on the watermen who did not have patent tongs and the expense to them getting this gear. They felt this would eliminate them from working at that time and in that area if they wanted to harvest. When asked for public comments, someone said he thought the patent tong was too damaging to the oysters to be allowed and the hand scrape with the dragging of the gear and circular movements actually helped to improve the resource on the oyster rocks.

The Committee felt the Scrape Season would be the most acceptable with two changes. Tommy Kellum made a motion to move back to opening in December and January for hand scrape in the Great Wicomico and the Mobjack Bay-Pultz Bar should be opened in February to hand scrape not in November. This was seconded by Lake Cowart. The motion carried, 10-0.

The discussion continued on regarding the bushel limits for harvesting by hand scrape, dredge, and patent tong. The staff recommended it be 16 bushels with 5-day work week or 24 bushels with a 4-day work week. The Committee felt that the 16 bushels vessel limit with a 5-day work week was more acceptable than the 24 bushel vessel limit with a 4-day work week. Tommy Kellum moved to accept the Scrape Season with the modifications made plus to allow for a 16 bushels limit and 5 days work week. J. C. Hudgins seconded the motion. The motion carried, 9-0-1. Jackie Shannon abstained from voting.

Andrew Button reviewed the results of the SAV-SMAC subcommittee meeting for the committee.

When asked about any other business, Ben Johnson asked about the motion made at the April 2017 committee meeting for repealing the June 1st date for re-harvesting James River seed oysters transplanted to private oyster grounds. Andrew Button stated that staff did not support the repeal of this restriction, but would bring it to the attention of the Commission at their meeting in August 2017 when the 2017-2018 Seasonal changes are decided.

Jackie Shannon, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, announced that the Foundation was seeking the Governor's support in acquiring more State funding for the State Oyster Replenishment Program.

Lake Cowart moved to adjourn the meeting. J. C. Hudgins seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting ended at approximately 5:37 p.m.