

VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
FINFISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
VMRC CINFERENCE ROOM
June 21, 2005

MEMBERS PRSENT

Mr. Walter Rogers
Mr. Douglas Jenkins
Mr. Robert Weagley
Mr. David Agee proxy for Dr. Ken Neill
Mr. Jeff Deem
Mr. William Laine, Jr.
Mr. Chris Vaughan
Hon. Russell Garrison
Mr. Wynston Holbrook
Mr. Tom Powers
Mr. Pete Nixon

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Samuel Swift
Hon. Gordon Birkett

VMRC STAFF

Mr. Jack Travelstead
Mr. Roy Insley
Mr. Joe Cimino

I. Introductions, Announcements

Chairman Garrison called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. On behalf of the Finfish Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) Chairman Garrison presented Roy Insley with a plaque to recognize his many years of service to FMAC.

II. Approval of the minutes from the May 17, 2005 meeting

The minutes were approved.

III. Old Business

Mr. Travelstead stated that there should be an Item B to the Old Business section of the agenda: to update the FMAC on the special committee meeting for commercial striped bass.

a. Continued discussion on options to reduce recreational Chesapeake Bay Area striped bass harvest in 2005

Mr. Travelstead reminded FMAC that at the last meeting the Committee was informed that the recreational striped bass harvest exceeded its quota by nearly one million pounds. He then updated FMAC on the Ad Hoc committee meeting that was held to review options, which would allow VMRC to reign in the recreational striped bass fishery. Mr. Travelstead made it clear that there is no impending ASMFC mandate to lower the recreational harvest, as yet, because the ASMFC sets an annual Bay-wide quota which has yet to be exceeded. It was pointed out that some members of the Ad Hoc committee had some apprehensions about the MRFSS survey data. Mr. Travelstead mentioned that a representative from the National Marine Fisheries Service MRFSS would be present at the July FMAC meeting to discuss this issue.

Mr. Travelstead, as well as several FMAC members, expressed the value of having someone from NMFS present. There was also discussion on a request to NMFS, regarding the future procedures of the MRFSS.

Chairman Garrison explained that the FMAC members could help by encouraging, as he had recently done, the charter boat industry to attend the public hearing regarding recreational regulation changes.

Mr. Travelstead gave an in depth review of what the recreational Ad Hoc committee discussed. He conveyed his feeling that the Ad Hoc committee should meet again sometime in July. Any recommendations could be presented to FMAC at the July meeting.

b. Update on Ad Hoc commercial striped bass committee.

Mr. Travelstead explained that staff has recommended, to the Ad Hoc commercial striped bass committee, to look into options other than a poundage based quota system. Staff is not specifically against such a system, however, there are numerous enforcement and implementation issues that render this option impractical at this time.

A discussion followed on the two-quota system for the commercial striped bass fishery. Mr. Travelstead explained that if FMAC wanted to address how the quota is allocated, that is something that can be put on VMRC's agenda sometime in the future. He also said that the commercial Ad Hoc committee was formed to address a weight based quota system in particular. With that

option no longer being considered, Mr. Travelstead stated that in his opinion the Ad Hoc committee was no longer needed.

Mr. Powers suggested that before any further discussion on reallocating the quota, staff should seek legal council regarding any possible lawsuits.

After some further discussion, Mr. Travelstead informed the FMAC on what the Ad Hoc committee had recommended. He then explained that the Ad Hoc committee proposed that both the Ocean and Bay systems use two types of tags. The Bay would have tags for fish between 18"-28" and tags for 18" and greater. The Ocean fishery would have tags for 28"-34" fish, and tags for 28" and greater. This system would initially divide tags equally between the two types, and should see a reduction in the average size fish over time. This system would need to be reviewed annually and after first year would have to address any concerns.

Mr. Travelstead also reported that staff recommends looking at a maximum mesh size requirement. He then discussed the Ad Hoc committee's recommendation to eliminate the minimum size restriction on gill nets for upriver fishermen. Staff is willing to recommend the restriction be repealed as well.

Mr. Weagley expressed his full support for the repeal.

Mr. Powers asked if any provisions were going forward to prevent Bay tags from being used on Ocean fish.

Mr. Travelstead explained that such provisions were recommended already, by staff and by the Ad Hoc committee.

Mr. Garrison inquired if staff had prepared priorities that could be funded if the proposed regulation to increase permit and license fees went into effect.

Mr. Travelstead declared that the subcommittee that created the proposed increases produced a list of current needs.

Mr. Weagley asked if the issue of striped bass biomass might be addressed.

Mr. Travelstead responded that the ASMFC Management Board had not made a decision on fishing mortality (F) at its last meeting because it was made clear that the ASMFC Technical Committee did not have confidence in the assessment numbers. Therefore, the Management Board decided to hold off on making any changes to the target mortality level. However, it is more likely that the target F will need to be reduced, since it appears all available data is pointing towards a lower spawning stock for striped bass.

IV. New Business

Mr. Powers requested that staff start the process to change Regulation 4 VAC 20-670-10 et. al., "Pertaining to Recreational Gear Licenses" so that recreational cast nets and dip nets would have the same restrictions as rod and reel. He explained his concern was mainly for species such as blue fish, red drum, striped bass, and flounder which had certain restrictions pertaining to commercial harvest quotas that did not allow possession by such recreational gear types as cast nets, or dip nets.

V. Next Meeting

The next meeting was set for Tuesday, July 19 at 7pm.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25pm.