

DRAFT MINUTES

Recreational Fishing Advisory Board Meeting September 12, 2005

Members Present

George Hudgins - Chairman
Edward Rhodes - Vice-chair
John Barr
Carolyn Brown

Jim Deibler
Jesse "Jimmie" Duell
Charles Randolph

Members Not Present

Carlisle Bannister
Charles Southall

At 7:08 p.m., Mr. George Hudgins called the meeting to order.

Sonya Davis reminded everyone that the meeting on November 14 would begin at 5:30 p.m. for the work session and dinner would be provided for the Board members. The final meeting for this cycle would be the same evening at 7. Sonya also announced that the Eastern Shore Angler's Club was meeting this evening, so neither Mr. Abell nor Mr. Evans would be available to address any questions for Item A or B. However, over 60 children attended both events, and they would try to provide a spreadsheet for the November meeting. Also, Claude Bain was presenting at the Eastern Shore Angler's Club meeting and would not be available to discuss his project. Jon Lucy also had a prior engagement and would not be here this evening.

Jane McCroskey indicated the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) should be transferring to the fund about \$ 1.3 million in the next 2 weeks. On the financial report, that would increase the amount available for projects to almost \$800,000.

Mr. Hudgins asked for a review of the draft July 11, 2005 RFAB meeting minutes. Mr. Barr made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Deibler seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to accept the draft minutes as final.

Multi-Year Projects for Renewal

- A. 2005 Saxis Fishing Pier Youth Fishing Tournament (Year 4) \$1,500.**
- B. 2005 Morley's Wharf Youth Fishing Tournament (Year 4) \$1,500.**
- C. 2006 Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 9) \$6,000.**
- D. 2006 Virginia Game Fish Tagging (Year 12) \$60,823.**
- E. Artificial Fishing Reef Structure Acquisition and Deployment \$200,000.**
- F. 2006 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 5) \$6,000.**

New Projects

- G. Sheepshead Population Dynamics in Chesapeake Bay, Virginia (Year 1) \$64,545.**

- H. Wallop-Breaux Matching Funds \$291,583.**
- I. Administration of the Recreational Saltwater Boat Decals \$30,976.**
- J. Withdrawn**
- K. 2005 Artificial Fishing Reef Pocket Location Guides \$50,000.**
- L. Undercover Law Enforcement Funds for Covert Fisheries Operations \$25,000.**

Mr. Hudgins asked if there was any public comment on Items A, B or C:

Bob Allen (PSWSFA & Peninsula CCA), speaking for himself tonight, asked if he could comment on all items. Commissioner Pruitt appoints Board members and can remove you at will. The VMRC has the authority to approve or deny funding of any of the projects the Board has before them irrespective of the RFAB vote. The Wallop-Breaux fund is a tax on recreational gear. Now the VMRC has increased the recreational license fees to the maximum and did not increase the commercial fees as much as they were able to do. One of the Board members asked if he could speak to A, B, C and D for now and come back to the other items later in the evening. Mr. Allen indicated he had no objections to those items.

Larry Snider (CCA) said the CCA has been in support of the kid's tournaments. The only concern was for accountability. For tournaments that have been going on for many years, they were not really concerned about what you get per given dollar. They want to see new tournaments coming along scrutinized to make sure you were getting, "the same bang for your buck", so to speak as with the long running events. Other than that they support all of projects currently listed.

Rob Cowling had a question about Item A and B as to whether something was missing from the application as to the details of the events. He did not see the number of kids they were serving, the method, or what would be provided. His concern was that if you tried to lump unrelated kid's educational events with kid's tournaments, you may not be comparing the same types of events. You need to also consider the amount of outside funding and support provided by the organization sponsoring the event. An amount set per kid may not be the best measure as to whether or not the event is being done well enough. Need to look at each proposal to determine what is being done and how best to measure it. He invites everyone to attend the Children's Fishing Clinic (maybe one of the longest running events) and see what is provided to the children. A question was asked as to whether or not Claude Bain's program was incorporated into their event and Mr. Cowling informed the Board that it was. In the future, he would like to include the chaperones in keeping track of the catch-and-release cards for the kids.

Mr. Barr (RFAB) responded to Mr. Cowling's concerns about the Eastern Shore tournaments. He explained that though they are listed as tournaments, they are very similar to the educational programs that everyone else does. The kids are not really competing with each other like a true tournament.

Mr. Cowling also indicated that Don Lancaster came up with a guidelines binder to help organizations develop similar programs and provided it to Claude Bain some time in the past.

Mr. Hudgins moved on to Item E:

Mike Meier spoke to give some background on the current status of the Artificial Reef Program. They have had some permitting hurdles to overcome before starting on 3 new reef sites in Mobjack, Bluefish Rock and Poquoson. He is hoping to use reef balls and/or work with Bay Shore Concrete to get structure material from Cape Charles.

Larry Snider (CCA) indicated that the CCA supported this project and other similar Artificial Reef programs. CCA members believe this type of project (angler access) is right on target, as to the types of projects that should be funded by the recreational licenses.

Mr. Hudgins asked if anyone had public comment on Item D:

Larry Snider (CCA) indicated CCA support of the Game Fish Tagging Program.

Mr. Hudgins moved on to Item F:

Clayton Ernest (Newport News Rotary Club) supported the Kiwanis Club with this project in the past. Even though it is the only clinic that occurs during the week, it does very well, and the children enjoy it. He also helps with the Newport News clinic. He hopes to continue to be involved with these types of programs.

Mr. Hudgins moved on to New Projects, Item G:

Jack Travelstead explained to the Board members that Eric Robillard was now in charge of the VMRC Plans and Statistics Department and would not be directly involved with the ODU project. Jack was asked if he thought this would have an effect on the project and responded it would not.

Larry Snider (CCA) enthusiastically supports the project. In the spring, the CCA approached the academic community to initiate a study on sheepshead. Most in the organization preferred to obtain scientific data before pursuing any protective action for the species. They have observed a gradual increase in the number of people fishing for sheepshead over the last few years. This year the effort has exploded to a large number of sheepshead harvested. They support the project that ODU has proposed realizing it is a 3 year study, but the amount requested is for 1 year. They feel this is a pro-active step to monitor the fishery and gain valuable information on the species.

Mr. Hudgins moved on to Item H:

Jack Travelstead informed the Board that the Commission had voted to use \$30,000 of the commercial funds to provide state match for Wallop-Breaux projects, and that would decrease the requested amount to \$261,583. We will attempt to request the match funds from the General Assembly for next year. We have requested it in the past and have not been successful, but will continue to try. Also, the Board is aware that the Commission increased the recreational and commercial license fees for next year. That will increase the available funds on the commercial side, and one project submitted will be to provide

Wallop-Breaux matching funds. The commercial funds are not available this year, but next year. Our match, plus in-kind match from the universities, brings in about 1.1 million dollars each year. The majority of the money is used to provide stock monitoring that is mandated by ASMFC. A very small amount is used to provide money to Jane's staff for accounting of all the projects. Another project, ChesMMAP, which is not mandated by ASMFC, provides very important information on multiple species. Menhaden is one of those species monitored, and many recreational fishermen are interested in the monitoring of that fishery. All the other monitoring projects (2 striped bass, American shad, and finfish ageing) are required to be done by all states. In Virginia, no other money other than the Wallop-Breaux funding is available for these projects. If we do not do these monitoring projects, the ASMFC could find us out of compliance and close the fisheries down. ASMFC is currently looking at the New York weakfish fishery to see if they are out of compliance with the Management Plan. NY failed to collect some information on weakfish, and the ASMFC is trying to decide whether to close it down or not. It is a serious subject matter and Mr. Travelstead hopes no one in Virginia is against monitoring these fisheries.

Various Board members mentioned the benefits of leveraging your dollars to take advantage of receiving the federal funds. Also mentioned were the benefits for everyone in the state by monitoring these fisheries.

Bob Allen, representing himself as well as other anglers, reiterated his statement from earlier in the evening about the Commission's decision to increase the license fees. The recreational sector will continue to have a bundle of money and the commercials will not have enough funds to pay for their fair share. He resents the fact that the Board is being threatened with the closures of fisheries for not funding this project. Mr. Allen feels that no matter how the RFAB votes on this matter the Commission will take the money from the recreational fund because they have that authority. He hopes that the RFAB will take a stand and not support items H, I, K or L.

Larry Snider (CCA) referred to the written CCA statement where they have this item listed as non-support versus partial-support as in past years. Much of that is based on the commercial funds not being available to support this project.

Mr. Rhodes stated his concern on the submission of "carbon copy" public comments. He was also concerned with the potential loss of a 3:1 match of dollars. He pointed out that some of the tax money when you buy fishing tackle goes to the Game Department (DGIF). He worried that if we stop asking for the federal dollars they may not be available in the future.

Mr. Duell asked Jack Travelstead what the Wallop-Breaux money was supposed to be used for. Jack responded that the money must be used for projects that would benefit recreational finfish fisheries. However, the projects could cover a broad range of benefits. There are some guidelines listed. Fish & Wildlife Service heavily scrutinizes all the projects. A past use of the money (before ASMFC mandates) was for the creation of artificial reefs. You cannot use it for law enforcement or regulatory education. You cannot use funds for recreational crabbing. The funds are only for finfish.

Mr. Randolph asked how the commercial funds were administered. Jack explained that there was a 9 member board, just like this one, that would review project proposals. However, in recent years the commercial board did not have any additional money after paying for commercial harvest mandatory reporting, so that Board has not met in a number of years. Staff went to the Commission to raise commercial fees to cover the increasing cost of mandatory reporting and have some money for projects.

Mr. Hudgins moved on to Item I:

Jane McCroskey informed everyone that she and Mr. Rhodes had spoken to the Game Department (DGIF). Somewhere between 3 and 9 months from now, the DGIF will take back the issuance of the boat decal. As they get the reports back from the Licensing Agents, they will send out the decal that goes along with the paper saltwater boat license. She does not know the exact time when they will take that back over. The Commission has spent about \$4,000 so far on mailing the decals out. December, January and February tend to be very busy months, as people buy the licenses for the next year.

Mr. Deibler asked Jane if she had a prediction of the final cost. Jane responded that until the DGIF takes the task back, we have no way of estimating what the final cost will be. She indicated that the DGIF is questioned about every 2 weeks, as to when they will take the distribution of the boat decals back.

Mr. Rhodes pointed out some of the computer and printer issues that the DGIF must overcome and the fact that some Agents do not want to automate. He also indicated that he would be meeting with DGIF a few more times and would delve into the issue more and report back at the next meeting.

Mr. Barr asked about the costs for the DGIF for taking the task back over. Jane responded that the DGIF indicated that the cost would be minimal, but they did not give a more specific amount.

Jane and Jack also thanked Mr. Rhodes for all his help in dealing with the DGIF on this issue.

Bob Allen mentioned that at the last meeting, many had asked about the need for the boat decal. He also referred to a survey sent out by David Agee that indicated that the anglers did not support the need to have the boat decal. The paper license would suffice. He wanted someone to take action to do away with the decal because it was perceived as an unnecessary expense.

Jack Travelstead updated everyone that discussions with our attorney indicated that the issuance of the decal was up for VMRC discussion/decision and did not require legislative action. He clarified that Colonel Steve Bowman does care about this issue and wants angler input on the boat decal. Jack wanted everyone to keep in mind that it may increase the probability of being boarded by a Law Enforcement Officer. Please keep in mind Jane has incurred some expense already. Until the decision is made, we will continue to pursue the DGIF to take back the task. Jack was asked as to whether Law Enforcement kept data on boat boarding specifically for license checks. Jack said they

kept numbers on boats boarded, but he did not think they would show the specific reason for the boarding. We will continue to evaluate the situation and let David Agee complete his survey of the recreational angler groups. Ms. Brown asked Jack who had the final say on this issue and Jack indicated the Commissioner, Mr. Pruitt.

Bill Tice (recreational angler) wanted to let everyone know that with or without the decal the Law Enforcement will board your boat because they are looking at your number of fish and size of fish. He also pointed out that if everyone on your boat is 65 or over you do not have to have a decal. He also mentioned that he approved of the Wallop-Breaux funds, but wondered why the RFAB could not loan the money for the match and be reimbursed later.

Bob Allen asked if the money was for this year or for next year and what would happen to money if not all of the 30 thousand dollars was spent. He was told that it was to cover some expense for this year and some for next year because the DGIF may not start January 1. He was also informed that money would be returned to fund, if not used.

Mr. Hudgins moved on to Item K (Item J was withdrawn):

Mike Meier gave an update on the pocket guide. He spoke to Claude Bain and the idea was to cut back on the number of pages dedicated to the Artificial Reef Program in the Angler's Guide. The Angler's Guide would only give a brief introduction to the Program and reference the reader to the Pocket Guide for details. The Pocket Guide would be done as a insert in the Angler's Guide. He did not have the amount of money, cutting a dozen pages out of the Angler's Guide, would save.

Mr. Randolph asked if a cost comparison has been done as to the less expensive way to provide the information to the anglers (either Angler Guide or Pocket Guide). Also with the information available on the website, do we need to provide it in a book. He pointed out that once he got the numbers of a location he would put them into his GPS and not look at the guide or website again.

Mike responded that the size is convenient to carry in a pocket, tackle box or glove compartment. Also, he mentioned that not everyone has Internet to access the information on the website. His final goal was to have the information in many formats available to the public.

Mr. Barr pointed out that if the pages removed from the Angler's Guide would create a savings enough to produce the Pocket Guide, then he felt the money may already be approved. RFAB did not put any specific restrictions for Claude as to what the Angler's Guide must look like. He wanted Mike to have more discussions with Claude.

Mr. Hudgins moved on to Item L:

Lieutenant John Croft wanted to reiterate that they were the only full-time undercover operations group on the coast. They work hard and were very proud of what they have accomplished. He was concerned with the comments that the program only benefits commercial watermen. Most (95%) of the arrests are commercially oriented, but the

protection of the resource benefits everyone in the state, recreational fishermen included. He was proud of fact that they did not have to arrest many recreational anglers. His program does not receive the same funding as the rest of the Division, so these types of funds are critical for the continuation of the program. You get tremendous “bang for the buck” with this program. In the future, he needs to meet with the recreational angling groups and educate them as to what they do and how it benefits them. Because of the equipment and documentation their conviction rate is about 98%. Their goal is protection of the resource for everyone and he hopes they may continue in that endeavor.

Some RFAB members complimented Lt. Croft on the team’s accomplishments.

Larry Snider (CCA) indicated to John that it would help for him to speak to the clubs and educate them. The written comments indicated partial-support versus full-support as in years past because members are upset in general about RFAB spending and the recreational fund as a “cash cow” to support everything. CCA feels the recreational funds could help with the equipment and the commercial funds should be used for such things as “buy money”.

Bob Allen wanted to make it clear that they had nothing against Lt. Croft or Law Enforcement. They would support an even greater amount (\$100,000) if the commercials could come up with the same amount. The whole problem is that the commercial cannot come up with anything. All the items discussed that the recreational do not support are the repercussions to the Commission having the opportunity to increase the commercial fees to the maximum and they chose not to. The commercial fund will still not have enough money to help fund these projects. The Commission did choose to increase the recreational fees to the maximum and the recreational fund has plenty of money.

Mr. Duell mentioned that he agreed with some of the comments, but for the concerns with the license fee increases the public needed to speak directly to the VMRC Board and not the RFAB.

There was a brief discussion on the location of sheepshead and the recent expansion of the fishery. Some were not sure that the species can survive for 3 years while we wait for the completion of the ODU study. Jack announced that sheepshead will be added to the Finfish Advisory Committee Agenda for September 20, 2005 at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Hudgins reiterated that the Monday, November 14, work session meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. with dinner and the final meeting at 7:00 p.m., unless a Board member had a conflict. No members had any comments.

Mr. Hudgins adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.