

FINAL MINUTES

Recreational Fishing Advisory Board Meeting

March 12, 2007

Members Present

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

Jim Deibler
Jesse "Jimmie" Duell
Charles Randolph
Charles Southall

Members Not Present

Carlisle Bannister

At 7:05 p.m., Chairman Hudgins called the meeting to order and asked if staff had any announcements. Ms. Sonya Davis announced that written public comment on Items A through R will be accepted through May 21, 2007.

Ms. Jane McCroskey informed everyone that the revenue available for projects is estimated as \$3.2 million, as of September 30, 2007. Mr. Rhodes asked how the approved increase of fees to the licensing agents would affect the status of available funds. Ms. McCroskey explained that the new legislation increased the saltwater license fee of 50 cents per license to \$1.00 per license, which would equal the fee that the licensing agents receive for the sale of freshwater licenses. This would increase the cost of selling saltwater licenses by approximately \$70,000. However, the increase is not effective until July 1, 2007, so the increase would only have a small impact on the available funds projected for September.

Mr. Hudgins asked for a review of the draft January 8, 2007 RFAB meeting minutes. Mr. Rhodes made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Randolph seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to accept the draft minutes as final.

Multi-Year Projects for Renewal.

- A) 2007 Sunshine Children's Fishing Program. Denny Dobbins, Portsmouth Anglers Club. **\$7,194.** Mr. Dobbins explained that this was the 28th year of this program. This year's request is about \$270 more than last year's request. The program will continue with 4 headboat trips and 1 pier day all in the month of July. The pier fishing day will take place on the Lynnhaven Pier on the 3rd Thursday in July.

Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA supports this program, as well as Items B and C.

- B) 2007 Saxis & Morley's Wharf Fishing Pier Youth Fishing Tournaments (Year 6). Allen Evans, Eastern Shore of Virginia Anglers Club. **\$2,500.** See Item A for CCA comments.

- C) 2007 Early Summer Children's Fishing Program. Melvin Dudley, Northampton County Anglers Club. **\$1,100.** Mr. Dudley read a letter from Branden Weathers, one of the kids that had participated in past fishing programs, who urged the continuation of the program for others to enjoy. See Item A for CCA comments.
- D) Artificial Reef, Funding for Deployment of Structure 2006-2007. Mike Meier, VMRC. **\$150,000.** Mr. Meier informed everyone that concrete from the Wilson Bridge demolition project will not be available to Virginia. He will investigate other sources of available concrete materials. When asked if he needed more funding, Mr. Meier responded that he would try to keep the costs within whatever funding the Board was willing to make available to the Artificial Reef Program. He anticipated that the cost per ton to deploy material would increase, but at present, he was not able to give an exact figure. A request for proposal (RFP) will be advertised for the creation and deployment of 300 reef balls to distribute between the new Poquoson Reef and the Northern Neck Reef. He expects the cost per reef ball to be somewhere around \$400 each, but he will not have an exact amount for at least 30 days. No public comment.
- E) Visual Function in Chesapeake Bay Sport and Prey Fishes: Summer Flounder, Bluefish, Cobia, and Atlantic Menhaden (Year 2). A. Horodysky, R. Brill, R. Latour, VIMS. **\$50,289.** Mr. Andrij Horodysky invited any Board members to visit the lab either the last week of March or the first two weeks of April. Also by the May 14th meeting, he hopes to have a draft of a poster. Once reviewed by the RFAB, the poster will be made available to angler's clubs and to bait and tackle shops.

Larry Snider (CCA of VA): Originally, the CCA did not support this project because they did not see the benefit to the average angler. Since that time they have supported the project with the qualification that the information would be made available to the average angler through the Angler's Guide. Mr. Horodysky thought the newest Angler's Guide was about to be released, so the information would not be in the 2007 version. He would make the information available for the next printing of the Angler's Guide, as well as create the posters.

- F) Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-Year American Eel, *Anguilla rostrata*, in the Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay (Year 7). Marcel Montane, VIMS. **\$36,325.** (Items F and H were discussed together) Mr. Montane let the Board know that both this project and Item H have been submitted to the Commercial Fishing Advisory Board (CFAB) for funding review. A request for funding has also been submitted to the NOAA, Chesapeake Bay Office for Item H. With the current budget freeze, they do not know if any federal funds will be available. Also, a short presentation for angler groups has been developed on the VIMS trawl survey (Item H) and how it benefits the recreational fishery.

Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA does not support this project (Item F) because they feel this project does not have a direct benefit to the recreational sector. Eels are more of a commercial fishery and funding should come from the commercial side. The CCA

does realize the importance of the VIMS trawl survey (Item H) and supports a 50% split between the recreational and commercial funds. The CCA wants other sources of funding researched to support the continuation of the survey.

- G) Enhancing Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Habitat: Research and Education for Restoration (Year 13). Robert Orth, VIMS. **\$95,689.** Dr. Orth said that they will continue to emphasize their restoration efforts on the Seaside coastal bays because of the success they have had in those areas. They have planted 150 acres over the last 5 years and those have expanded to well over 300 acres. The federal budget is still in disarray. The NOAA funding received thus far has been reduced from \$600,000 to \$250,000. The Army Corps of Engineers still does not have a 2007 budget, so funding support is unknown at this time. If Dr. Orth receives the necessary federal funding, this proposal will be withdrawn.

Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA supports this project. The CCA would like to see commercial funds contributed, also. If commercial funds are not used for the restoration efforts, the CCA would like to see the SAV beds made off-limits to commercial fishing activities. They appreciate Dr. Orth's efforts to secure the federal funding and hope the funds will be forthcoming.

- H) Estimating Relative Juvenile Abundance of Recreationally Important Finfish and Crustaceans in the Virginia Portion of Chesapeake Bay. M. Fabrizio, M. Montane, VIMS. **\$469,568.** See Item F above.

New Projects.

- I) Virginia Marine Sportfish Collection (Year 1). Joe Grist, VMRC. **\$12,000.**

Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA supports this project because it will fill in the gaps of scientific data necessary for the management of these species. There are not huge numbers of people fishing for cobia, red drum, and speckled trout, but these species are important to various groups of recreational anglers. Also, the Finfish Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) and Commission will be reviewing possible management options for tilefish and grouper, so the collection of data is important for those species.

- J) SAS Licensing and Training for VMRC Technical Staff. Joe Grist, VMRC. **\$38,500.** Mr. Grist mentioned that this project has also been submitted to the Commercial Fishing Advisory Board (CFAB) for funding review.

Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA supports a 50% split between the recreational and commercial funds.

- K) Quinby Harbor Enhancements. David Fluhart, Quinby Harbor Committee, Accomack County. **\$352,950.** Mr. Fluhart informed everyone that they will re-evaluate the Phase 2 (fishing pier/dock) portion of proposal and return in a future review cycle to seek funding assistance. Some concern was raised with the possibility of conflicts between boat traffic and pier fishermen in the narrow channel area. At this time, the Quinby Harbor

Committee's highest priority is the Phase 1 (boat ramp replacement & parking areas) portion of the proposal. The new request will be \$294,375 (75% of \$392,500). The Committee/County will submit a modified budget for review at the May 14 RFAB meeting. One of the written project reviews brought up an issue with the boat ramp location being at the end of a state road. Mr. Fluhart explained that the Harbor Committee had discussed moving the ramp to the southern side of the harbor, but believes that would create more traffic problems than the current location. Generally, the only people that use the road are coming to use the harbor facilities. There is a county dumpster site on the northern end, but that is expected to be removed in a few years and that will lessen any extra traffic. Also, because of the way the harbor is configured, there is no potential for any housing developments and extra traffic being added in the future. Mr. Rhodes asked about future maintenance of the location. Mr. Fluhart explained that when the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries ended the maintenance of the facility, the Harbor Committee enacted a boat ramp fee to help with costs. The Committee hopes to continue collecting the ramp fee, but provide a discount to licensed Virginia saltwater anglers. Also, Accomack County leases boat slips in the harbor to private citizens, and those monies are added to the maintenance fund.

Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA supports this access project.

- L) Saxis Fishing Pier Expansion. Charles Tull, Mayor, Town of Saxis. **\$132,107**. No public comment.
- M) 2007 Hope House Fishing Excursion and Clinic. D. Hurst, C. Macin, Great Bridge Fisherman's Association. **\$2,500**. Debbie Hurst, president of the GBFA, introduced herself to the Board. No public comment.
- N) Abundance, Distribution and Biology of Sharks and Rays in Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's Coastal Lagoons: Continuation of a Long-term Monitoring and Research Program. D. Grubbs, J. Musick, VIMS. **\$89,073**. Dr. Grubbs provided a hand-out to the Board, which showed some of the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS) collection of recreational shark data in comparison to commercial landings data. The data provided was primarily sandbar sharks and does not include small coastal shark species or dogfish. Dr. Grubbs said that the available shark data show the fishery is split about 50% between the recreational catch and the commercial landings. Some recreational anglers do keep some of the sharks for table fare, but the landings have reduced substantially in recent years. Various funding sources, including the recreational fund and Wallop-Breaux, have provided funding for the shark monitoring program, since 1974. The most recent federal funding source, through the National Shark Research Consortium, has been reduced by 25%. The RFAB/CFAB proposal is to provide funds lost in the federal reduction, so the Chesapeake Bay and Seaside of the Eastern Shore sites may continue to be monitored. In addition to sharks, approximately 10%-15% of the survey budget includes the biological sampling and assessment of rays.

Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA decided that in comparison to the other projects requesting funding, this project was a low priority. They believe the research is

important, but does not have a direct benefit for the average recreational angler. The CCA does not support the funding of this project.

Tom Bonadeo (angler from Cape Charles): He believes this research is important and should continue. These are some of the toughest and longest living creatures in the sea. He does not target sharks or rays, but catches them while fishing for other species, such as red and black drum. Knowing the quantities, distribution, and numbers may help us to understand why sharks and rays survive in adverse conditions, such as low ambient oxygen, while the other fish do not. Though they are not a true recreational fish, the sharks and rays may be an indicator of the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

- O) Response of Summer Flounder to Hypoxia in Chesapeake Bay: Physiological Tolerances and Shifts in Habitat Use. M. Fabrizio, R. Brill, VIMS. **\$99,721**.

Larry Snider (CCA of VA): If recreational funding is available, the CCA would support a 50% split between the recreational and commercial funds for this project and Item Q. Flounder and striped bass are very important species to the average angler, as well as the commercial fishermen. The CCA asks whether any resource sharing may be done between the two projects to reduce cost.

- P) Effects of Piscivorous Fishes on Local Juvenile Game Fish Populations. P. McGrath, J. Musick, VIMS. **\$45,530**. No public comment.
- Q) Laboratory Investigations of the Ability of Striped Bass to Function under Low Ambient Oxygen Conditions. R. Brill, D. Gauthier, VIMS. **\$81,468**. See Item O for CCA comments.
- R) Estimate and Assess Social and Economic Importance and Value of Menhaden to Chesapeake Bay Stakeholders and Region (3 Year Study). James Kirkley, VIMS. **\$1,127,235 Amended to \$788,284 (Year 1 request = \$363,403)**. Dr. Kirkley has begun the study at his own risk, because of the study timeline. The project has been submitted to the Commercial Fishing Advisory Board (CFAB) for funding review. Built into the study, but at no cost to the RFAB/CFAB funds, was to host an international workshop. The point of the workshop is to bring everyone together to discuss the best methods for assessing the value to stakeholders of the different aspects of menhaden.

Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The recreational anglers of the CCA and many other organizations understand the importance of menhaden to prey species, such as striped bass, bluefish, and cobia. The CCA did not ask for this proposal to be submitted, as has been suggested by others in the public. The CCA does support the funding of this project. The CCA would like to see a 50% split between the recreational and commercial funds.

Chuck Macin (Great Bridge Fisherman's Association): The GBFA, as a club of over 100 members, is in full support of this project. The club believes this project will benefit

recreational fishermen and the entire ecosystem of the Chesapeake Bay. Menhaden are not only filter feeders, but also forage fish for striped bass and many other species of fish.

Discussion of Budget Amendments for a Previously Contracted Access Project: Conversion of a Protective Wavescreen into a Saltwater Fishing Pier. Michael Nealer, City of Newport News. The original 2004 request was for \$170,250. The new request is for an additional \$148,125, totaling \$318,375 from VSRFDF. The RFAB requested that the City of Newport News also investigate the additional cost of lighting for the fishing pier. The estimate to add lighting is \$111,066 (\$83,299 from VSRFDF). Mr. Doug Kennedy, City of Newport News, spoke for Mr. Nealer.

Mark Feltner (President, Virginia Coastal Access Now): VCAN supports this access project, as well as the Quinby Harbor improvements (Item K) and Saxis Fishing Pier expansion (Item L).

Because the November 2006 bid had expired and the lighting was not included in that bid package, the City will re-bid the project (to include lighting). The bid process takes approximately 8 weeks, and the bids are valid for 2 months. Mr. Southall made a motion to review the new bid package (to include lighting) at the May 14 meeting and make final recommendations. Mr. Barr seconded the motion, and the vote was 8-0 to accept the motion.

Discussion to Increase the Operating Budget of the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament. The current operating budget is \$199,000. The request is for an additional \$15,000 for this year and subsequent years. Ms. Jane McCroskey told the Board that Mr. Bain's budget had been at the \$199,000 level for the last few years. The cost of salary, fringe benefits, and generally the cost of doing business has increased. The requested additional amount is estimated to cover those increases. Mr. Rhodes made a motion to increase the VSFT budget. Mr. Southall seconded the motion, and the vote was 8-0 to accept the increase. (This item will be presented to the Commission in April)

The next RFAB meeting date is May 14 for the work session and final meetings of this review cycle. The time for the work session was changed from 5:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., due to the large number of projects. The final recommendations meeting will remain at 7:00 p.m.

The Second Cycle RFAB meetings are tentatively scheduled for July 9, September 10 and November 5.

Chairman Hudgins adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Note: Audio files of the meeting will be available at <http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/vsrfdf/index.shtml> (Choose, Current Proposals, on the left-hand menu)