DRAFT MINUTES

Recreational Fishing Advisory Board Meeting
July 11, 2006

Members Present

Edward Rhodes - Vice-Chair
Carlisle Bannister
John Barr
Carolyn Brown
Jim Deibler
Jesse "Jimmie" Duell
Charles Randolph

Members Not Present

George Hudgins - Chairman
Charles Southall

At 7:05 p.m., Vice-Chairman Rhodes called the meeting to order and asked for the status of the Fund.

Ms. Jane McCroskey informed everyone that $2.1 million is the estimated amount of revenue for the end of September 2006. She also said that with the on-line system of Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, monies have been transferred every month. This monthly transfer will make it easier to estimate revenue for the Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund (VSRFDF).

Mr. Rhodes announced that the new Commissioner, Steve Bowman, had a conflict and could not attend this meeting. Mr. Rhodes thought that Mr. Bowman may be available to attend the next RFAB meeting.

Mr. Rhodes asked for a review of the draft, May 2006 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.

Mr. Barr informed the other members that at the last session of the General Assembly, they raised the reimbursement rate for travel to 44.5 cents per mile. The RFAB will need to appropriate additional money in the RFAB travel account to cover the additional expense. Mr. Barr made a motion to add $10,000 to the account to cover Board member travel expenses. Mr. Deibler seconded the motion, and the vote was 7-0 to accept the increase.

Multi-Year Projects for Renewal.

A) Federal Assistance (Wallop-Breaux) Matching Funds FY 2007. Jack Travelstead, VMRC. **$225,000**. Mr. Travelstead updated the RFAB members on the status of the commercial Marine Improvement Fund (MIF). He explained that this was the first time in quite a number of years that the commercial fund had money available for new projects. Mr. Travelstead also explained that the Commission had expressed an interest

in funding certain commercial projects, and the Commercial Fishing Advisory Board (CFAB) was mandated to review those projects. Mr. Travelstead gave a brief overview of the projects to be funded with the small amount of commercial funds available ($319,494). After funding or partially funding 6 commercial projects, only $100,000 was leftover to use for Wallop-Breaux match. The total needed for State match is $325,000. Therefore, the request to the Recreational Board was reduced to $225,000. Mr. Randolph asked if that was all the commercial money they had available for the entire year and whether the funds were for a calendar year or state fiscal year. Mr. Travelstead said that was all the funding expected for this calendar year and we will not know what is available for next year until about March/April 2007. Mr. Barr asked if the commercial projects approved were on-going or whether they were for 1 year. Mr. Travelstead responded that some will continue to need funding next year and some should not. However, new commercial projects may arise that will require funding.

B) 2007 Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 10). Rob Cowling, Newport News Rotary Club and Coastal Conservation Association. **$6,000**. Mr. Cowling represented both Items B and C. The 2006 Clinic will be this Saturday, July 15 from 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m. on the James River Fishing Pier and everyone is invited to attend. The 2006 Kiwanis event is next Tuesday, July 18 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., and everyone is invited to attend, as well. The 2007 clinics will continue running as they have in the previous years, with the emphasis on education. The budgets are the same as for previous years. Each clinic invites about 250 children to attend. Mr. Cowling and Mr. Brown work closely together to put on both clinics and combine resources where they can. Both clinics pre-register the children, to make sure all the children have the proper release forms and adequate adult supervision (1 chaperone for every 5 children). One large hurdle is finding transportation to the clinics, for some of the children. They are researching various transportation options.

C) 2007 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 6). W. Brown, A. Nogiec, Capital District Kiwanis Club. **$6,000**. See Item B.

D) 2007 CCA Tidewater Youth Fishing Day (Year 10). T. Johnson, D. Hickman, B. Dieffenbach, Coastal Conservation Association, Tidewater Chapter**. $6,000**. Mr. Johnson explained that they too have some of the same issues that were discussed for Items B and C. They also have an educational event on the Lynnhaven Fishing Pier which begins at 8 a.m. The children go through the educational booths and are given equipment to fish with and keep for future outings. They will make every effort to get the children enrolled in the Junior Angler Program with the Saltwater Fishing Tournament. The 2006 Fishing Day will be on Thursday, August 10 with a rain date the following Monday, if necessary.

E) Sheepshead Population Dynamics in Chesapeake Bay, Virginia (Year 2). H. Liao, S. Haga, C. Jones, ODURF/CQFE**. $65,777**. Mr. Haga reminded everyone of what prompted the submission of the project proposal, for the first year, and gave a brief overview of what has been done to date. The goals for the second year are the same as the first. They need to determine age composition, growth rates, natural and fishing mortality rates, and the reproductive potential for the sheepshead caught in Chesapeake Bay. The fishery is at least 60% recreational and 40% commercial. Of the 74 samples collected so far, 13 have come from commercial nets and 61 from anglers. Mr. Haga began in May 2006 with an “angler outreach program” to solicit help in obtaining samples and explain the need for the research. Local anglers told Mr. Haga that the

normal peak of the recreational season is the month of July, so they will focus efforts on receiving samples from the anglers. Once the recreational season is over, they plan to continue with fishery independent sampling. Most, of the sheepshead received thus far, are in the 23- to 24-inch range. They have a few samples of large fish, but no small fish. Of the 74 samples, 68 have been aged. The oldest of the fish samples processed is 24 years. Most of the fish samples have been aged around 7 years. From the sheepshead processed, they are starting to see a trend that the females are larger and older than the males. This same trend is found in Louisiana and Florida sheepshead. No determinations on population parameters may be made until the sample size is much larger and the samples cover the entire size range. The budget for the second year of the study is similar to the budget of the first year. However, since the contacts have already been established in the first year, more time will be available for receiving and processing samples. Ms. Brown asked how many fish would be needed for an adequate sample size. Mr. Haga responded that for the size-at-age portion of the study, a sample size of 400-600 fish would be adequate, provided that the samples were evenly distributed across all size categories. With the random sampling process, covering all the size categories may be difficult. Gonad sampling will depend on whether they receive fish at the proper stage, so the more fish, the better (Out of 100 fish, he may get 12 in the right stage). The anglers may take the fillets from the fish before donating the sample, and most do. Ms. Brown also asked if he had received any samples from areas other than the CBBT. Mr. Haga is aware of fish caught in other areas but was not able to sample those fish. The samples provided to date are from the lower Bay. However, he hopes he will be able to get some fish from other areas.

F) Artificial Reef, Funding for Deployment of Structure 2006-2007. Mike Meier, VMRC. **$200,000**. Mr. Meier gave a brief update of the 3 projects currently underway or going out for bid. They are currently deploying concrete "materials of opportunity" on the Eastern Shore Artificial Reef sites. A contract was signed today to have concrete pipe deployed to the new Mobjack Bay Reef. Also, bids will be requested for construction of designed structures to be deployed on the Northern Neck Reef and Poquoson River Reef sites. The current request is to have funding available for 2006-2007, placement of "materials of opportunity" on Chesapeake Bay Artificial Reef sites or possibly on the coastal sites. If "materials of opportunity" are not available, then funds would be used to create and deploy designed structures, such as reef balls and tetrahedrons. Expenses would include contract fees for barges, marine inspection, towing and lifting equipment, as well as concrete fabrication equipment. Current pricing ranges from $21.00 to $40.00 per ton, depending on the amount of tonnage being deployed. Mr. Bannister asked what determines which sites receive material. Mr. Meier responded that some of the factors considered in deployments are 1) when the last time material was deployed to the site, or if it is a new site, they like to deploy as soon as possible to see how the location does, 2) location of the available material, 3) sites that are heavily used by anglers, such as Northern Neck and Back River, will receive priority over less used sites. Mr. Bannister asked how they determine the heavily used sites. Mr. Meier replied that they rely on angler feedback and personal visual observation, when working on buoys and deployments in the area.

G) 2007 Virginia Game Fish Tagging (Year 13). J. Lucy, VIMS and C. Bain, VMRC. **$64,787**. Mr. Lucy nor Mr. Bain were available to attend. Mr. Bain did E-mail a status summary of the 2006 Tagging Program, which was provided the Board members. Sonya Davis asked that Board members forward questions to her, and she would forward them

to Mr. Lucy and Mr. Bain. Answers to any questions would be provided at the September 11, RFAB meeting.

New Projects.

H) Ocean View Recreational Fishing and Education Pier. Stanley Stein, Assistant City Manager, Norfolk. **$215,850**. Mr. Wayne Webster, from the City of Norfolk, provided a brief overview of the proposed project. The pier design is sort of a U-shape. The outboard end and one stem are primarily for recreational fishing and the other stem for educational use. From recommendations made by Mr. Lownes of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and RFAB members, the design includes the extension of the pier out to 12-14 feet of water for better recreational fishing opportunities. Also, Mr. Lownes suggested adding rip-rap under the pier and along the shoreline for fish habitat improvement. The pier will also be handicapped-accessible, and 7 ladders will be added around the pier for safety. At least 5000 families in the area are expected to use the pier. Norfolk intends to provide no-fee fishing, for the anglers using the pier. Various Norfolk schools will be able to use the pier to teach the children fishing techniques, fish identification, and about the marine environment. Also, the East Ocean View Recreational Center will provide fishing education and loaner fishing equipment. Included in the packet is only a schematic of the pier. As of today, the City Council has appropriated the funds to complete the full pier design and to continue on with this proposal. The full pier design will be forwarded when complete. The property owner, Mr. Ed Clark, agreed today to provide an easement for the pier between Lot# 80 and Lot# 79. This means that the location of the pier will be shifted 15 feet to the west on the drawing initially provided to the Board. Mr. Barr asked about length of time the easement would be with Mr. Clark's property. Mr. Webster responded that he has not seen the contract yet, but it would either be a minimum of 30 years or more likely 99 years. Most of the easements in the past have been for 99 years. The final signed contract with Mr. Clark is not available this evening, but will be provided to the Board by the next meeting. Mr. Randolph asked about the usage of the pier. Mr. Webster explained that when no educational programs are taking place on the one stem, the entire pier would be available for recreational fishing. Most of the school programs would take place during the week and in the mornings. Mr. Deibler asked whether the City would take care of liability insurance and future maintenance. Mr. Webster said that the City is self-insured and the pier would be under that protection, and Parks and Recreation would maintain the pier. Mr. Bannister asked whether the City would replace the pier in the event of a hurricane or something that would destroy the pier. Mr. Webster has not asked that question of the City yet, but would provide the answer at the next meeting. Ms. Brown asked whether there was adequate parking at the Recreational Center. Mr. Webster replied that there are approximately 70 paved parking spaces to the front and side of the Recreational Center building. Ms. Brown asked whether or not one would have to be a member of the Recreational Center to use the pier. Mr. Webster indicated that a visitor would not have to be a member. The pier would be open to anyone coming to the area. The Recreational Center staff is only there to make sure people use the pier properly. The pier would only be open from dawn to dusk for security reasons (no lights). Mr. Bannister asked where the location of this pier was in relation to Harrison's Pier. Mr. Webster informed him that this location was more towards the Naval Base on Pretty Lake about 6 miles away from Harrison's which is on the Chesapeake Bay side.

I) Monitoring Mycobacteriosis in Chesapeake Bay Striped Bass Morone saxatilis: Tracking the State of the Epizootic. D. Gauthier, W. Vogelbein, K. Reece, VIMS. **$59,312**. Dr. Gauthier gave a brief overview of the bacterial disease of Mycobacteriosis. In some sampling areas, more than 50% of the striped bass show internal or external infection. Various tagging studies have shown a 20% increase in natural mortality for striped bass. The role of this disease in the natural mortality is still unknown, but being investigated by various projects. Samples from the entire Bay are collected from the VIMS ChesMMAP trawl survey (80 stations, 5 times per year). Dr. Gauthier continued to explain some of the accomplishments to date. A manuscript will be available toward the end of this year, which will cover the research from 2003 – 2006. This study has focused and will continue to focus on disease prevalence and severity. Dr. Gauthier explained that there is a lot of public concern and misinformation on this disease. The research team would like the opportunity to continue with this research to answer some of the questions about the disease and the impact on the Chesapeake Bay striped bass stock. The molecular tools developed for striped bass may also be used to discover whether the disease is prevalent in other recreationally important species and may be transmitted through prey species. Also, they will be sampling to determine, whether or not the disease is common in the environment. Mr. Bannister asked why they had not looked at the environment previously. Dr. Gauthier explained that they first had to develop the tools to detect the Mycobacterium and determine which species they needed to focus on. Now they have the tools and know which species cause the disease, so they may investigate other factors. Mr. Bannister also asked whether they looked at infecting one fish from another fish. Dr. Gauthier told him that in 2003 they had performed a few tests on injecting the bacteria into a fish and watching the progression of infection. They had to use a facility in West Virginia because they did not have the bio-safety facilities available locally to do these types of tests. The new VIMS seawater facility, currently under construction, will have the bio-safety measures to perform some of these types of studies. They plan to continue with further exposure studies once the facility is available. However, they do not know whether the disease is transmitted from fish to fish, but they plan to do these studies, once the proper facilities are in place. Mr. Bannister asked whether the disease was more prevalent in warm water versus cooler temperatures. Dr. Gauthier said that they have done a few tests and have seen an increase in progression of the disease as water temperatures were increased. Mr. Bannister asked if water temperatures were reduced would the fish heal. Dr. Gauthier said that was one of the studies, they would like to perform, once the proper facilities were in place.

J) Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) as essential fish habitat in lower Chesapeake Bay: Linking variation in SAV, forage animal production, and sportfish abundance. J. E. Duffy, R. Latour, J. van Montfrans, VIMS. **$69,268**. Dr. Duffy said that some of the questions they want to address in this study are 1) whether SAV beds are essential fish habitat for recreational fishes, and, if so, why? 2) why do the various seagrass beds vary in fish production? 3) how will the changing conditions in the seagrass communities affect recreational fishes? Dr. Duffy explained that they have a lot of information at the bottom of the food web inside the seagrass beds, as well as the top of the food web. The information they are lacking is in the middle food web connections with the small invertebrates and crustaceans. He continued with information found with some other studies on feeding habits and stomach content (some were funded with VSRFDF). Stomach content studies are showing a possible shift in foraging efforts for fish, such as striped bass, to invertebrates found in the seagrass communities rather than the expected

small fishes. Dr. Duffy mentioned that they would like to use the funding of this study as "seed money" to promote future funding from other sources, such as the National Science Foundation. There are similar projects going on, but this project will target finfish modeling in relation to SAV. Mr. Barr asked for clarification in the budget as to why his time was divided between Senior Personnel and Other Personnel. Dr. Duffy said that his time was listed under Senior Personnel and the listing under Other Personnel meant his technician, Paul Richardson, versus Mr. van Montfrans' technician.

K) A Genetic Assessment of the Potential for Local Depletion of Atlantic Menhaden (*Brevoortia tyrannus*) within Chesapeake Bay. J. Graves, J. McDowell, R. Latour, A. Lynch, VIMS. **$57,172**. Dr. McDowell said that concern has been raised, due to the reduction fishery, about a localized depletion of menhaden which may be occurring. Dr. McDowell informed the Board that the current stock assessment indicates that menhaden are not being overfished. However, the assessment parameters assume that the entire coastal population (Nova Scotia to Florida) is one stock. If this assumption is not true, then the stock assessment could be off, and the local population could indeed be in trouble. Purse seines have been banned in most states except for Virginia and North Carolina. From 1999 to 2004, 80% of the total harvest is coming from the Chesapeake Bay. Menhaden are important filter feeders that help with water clarity, and, historically, were important prey fish. Other studies are showing a shift in diet in some important recreational species, such as striped bass and weakfish. Also, studies indicate a shift in menhaden recruitment away from the Chesapeake Bay to other estuaries. This study is to determine whether menhaden are one stock, or if the Chesapeake Bay has a separate stock and localized depletion is occurring. The only way to determine this is through a genetic study. The details are outlined in the proposal. Mr. Barr asked about other menhaden studies sanctioned by the ASMFC. Mr. Travelstead informed him that those studies were ongoing and mainly to determine the number of fish in the Chesapeake Bay during the course of the year, not a genetic study. Mr. Barr also asked the length of time required, for the proposed study. Dr. McDowell indicated that this particular study is one year. However, information gained from this study may lead to future studies.

L) Utility of Alternative Reefs to Simultaneously Enhance Recreational Fish Production and Oyster Restoration. Rom Lipcius, VIMS. **$199,643**. Dr. Lipcius represented both Items L and M. The main question the two projects hope to answer is whether or not something may be done to enhance both oysters and recreational fish at the same time. Dr. Lipcius said that the proposed dual purpose reefs will increase the benefits and not replace the current programs, such as the VMRC Artificial Reef or Oyster Replenishment programs. Dr. Lipcius gave an overview of information found in other studies that support the benefits of concrete reef structures to recreational fish, as well as prey species such as oysters, mud crabs, clams, marine worms. Preliminary studies in the lower Rappahannock River indicate that the concrete oyster reef structures will attract and protect fish, also. In this study, Dr. Lipcius plans to modify the design of the reef structure to increase the benefits for fish, while still being productive habitat for oysters. He plans to discuss the final design of the concrete multi-layer (modular) structure with Mike Meier, Jon Lucy and other finfish experts to make sure optimal spacing between layers is available for juveniles and adults. The plan for the two studies is to set up 4 different reef habitats in the Lynnhaven Bay system (Broad Bay and Linkhorn Bay). The 4 different types of habitats to test are the new modular structure, reefs made of Reef Balls™, oyster reefs made of shell, and rip-rap reefs. The two studies would look at oyster survival and fish production and also to determine the optimal design for fish

abundance. Dr. Lipcius intends to use an underwater video system to help evaluate small fish production. Also, the studies would use diver surveys and angler surveys to evaluate large fish production. Another idea was to provide a "reef cam", with either live or taped video, to educate and involve the public with monitoring the reef. Some reasons for selection of the test sites are that the Lynnhaven has known potential for oyster set, the local community, CCA and Chesapeake Bay Foundation representatives are in support of these projects, the City of Virginia Beach has offered use of boat slips and local oyster lease holders have offered leased ground to use for the studies. This cooperative effort will help reduce time, effort and funding going into this research. Mr. Deibler asked if oysters could be harvested off the modular reef structure. Dr. Lipcius said that oysters could be harvested. However, the intent of these reefs is to leave the integrity intact as oyster sanctuaries. The oyster lease holders have committed to not harvesting oysters off these reef sites. Ms. Brown asked how much water depth was needed for these modular reefs. Dr. Lipcius said that there was not any set depth requirement. The modular reefs for an intertidal area would be a smaller size (2 ft. base by 2ft. height), whereas the ones to be used in the studies would be 4 ft. by 4 ft. The reefs could be built larger for deeper water depths, but would require much heavier equipment to place and remove. Mr. Barr asked what water depth the test reefs would be placed in. Dr. Lipcius said the sites selected had between 8 and 10 feet of water and were just off the channel, out of the way of the main boat traffic. The sites would be marked well, and the anglers could easily fish on the reef sites.

M) Prey Availability and Enhanced Production of Artificial Reefs for Recreational Fish and Native Oysters. Rochelle Seitz, VIMS. **$45,944**. See Item L.

The next RFAB meeting dates are September 11 at 7:00 p.m. (public hearing) and November 13 at 5:30 p.m. (work session) and 7:00 p.m. (final).

Mr. Barr reminded the other Board members that a request was made to discuss the item tabled from the previous review cycle: Item F, Impact on Mycobacteriosis on the Striped Bass Recreational Fishery in Chesapeake Bay, Year 2: What is the Fate of Infected Fish? J. Hoenig, W. Vogelbein, D. Gauthier, VIMS. **$88,500**. Mr. Duell made a motion to bring it back to the table for discussion and was seconded by Mr. Randolph. The vote was 6-1 to discuss the item. Dr. Vogelbein gave an update on the current funding status of this proposal. Dr. Vogelbein told the RFAB that NOAA has issued a three year grant to fund research of Mycobacteriosis. However, NOAA cut the first year of funding approximately 23%. VIMS modified the request for recreational funding to **$33,918**. Mr. Randolph made a motion to add this item to the September 11, 2006 agenda, adding that the RFAB must be provided a copy of the three year NOAA grant proposal. Also, a budget which indicates how the NOAA funding reduction relates to the original Recreational Board proposal, must be provided prior to the meeting. Mr. Barr seconded the motion with the additional provisions. The vote was 7-0 to add the item to the September 11, 2006 agenda.

Vice-Chairman Rhodes adjourned the meeting at 9:43 p.m.