

FINAL MINUTES

Recreational Fishing Advisory Board Meeting

January 9, 2006

Members Present

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

Jesse "Jimmie" Duell
Charles Randolph
Charles Southall

Members Not Present

Carlisle Bannister
Jim Deibler

At 7:00 p.m., Chairman Hudgins called the meeting to order and asked if staff had any announcements

Ms. Sonya Davis announced that the Agenda item, tabled from the November RFAB meeting, had already been addressed by the Commission, so it was not part of the January Agenda. She let attendees know that Mr. Bannister and Mr. Deibler would not be in attendance at the meeting. She also informed the Board members that a photo album from the Tidewater CCA was being passed around.

Ms. Jane McCroskey informed everyone that the Game Department had assumed the task of issuing the boat decals. The original approved amount for the VMRC expenses was \$10,000, but the actual cost was a little less than \$4,000. The unused amount will revert back into the fund in January. Ms. McCroskey indicated that the date on the first page of the budget should be changed from November 30, 2005 to September 30, 2006. The revenue available for projects, generated by the license fee increases, is estimated as \$2.3 million, by September 2006.

Mr. Hudgins asked for a review of the draft November 14, 2005 RFAB meeting minutes. Mr. Rhodes made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Barr seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to accept the draft minutes as final.

Multi-Year Projects for Renewal.

- A) 2006 CCA Tidewater Youth Fishing Day (Year 9). Tom Johnson, CCA Tidewater Chapter. **\$6,000.** Mr. Johnson thanked the Board for the support they have given this event for the last 8 years. The educational event gives underprivileged kids the opportunity to learn about the Bay, catch some fish and have some fun and lunch. They send the children home with a rod-and-reel, in hopes that they will become good citizens of the Bay in the future.

- B) 2006 Saxis Fishing Pier Youth Fishing Tournament (Year 5). Allen Evans, Eastern Shore of Virginia Angler's Club. **\$1,500**. No one was in attendance to present the project, so the item was not discussed.
- C) 2006 Morley's Wharf Youth Fishing Tournament (Year 5). Allen Evans, Eastern Shore of Virginia Angler's Club. **\$1,500**. No one was in attendance to present the project, so the item was not discussed.
- D) Enhancing Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Habitat: Research and Education for Restoration (Year 12). Robert Orth, VIMS. **\$81,350**. Dr. Orth mentioned that this project has been submitted every year for the last 11 years. However, the last 2 years, Dr. Orth has been able to obtain significant federal funding and was able to return most or all of the recreational funds requested. The main point of the project is to restore seagrass beds to the lower Chesapeake Bay and coastal bays. Dr. Orth thanked the Board for their early support of the project. Because of the RFAB support for research and restoration, they now have the knowledge and the processes in place to seek other funding sources for additional seagrass projects. Dr. Orth gave a brief synopsis of the status of the current Seaside project. Mr. Rhodes asked about the effects of boat scarring. Dr. Orth indicated that because of fishermen education and VMRC regulations, they have seen some decrease in scarring. However, because of the warm weather for 2005, the beds could be significantly impacted. He would know more about the impacts after the spring of 2006. Mr. Southall asked when federal funding might be available. Dr. Orth indicated that he might hear something by the March RFAB meeting.
- E) Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-Year American Eel, *Anguilla rostrata*, in the Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay (Year 6). Marcel Montane, VIMS. **\$31,683**. Mr. Montane thanked the Board for their past and present support and asked that they would continue funding this project. The ASMFC mandates the coastal states to monitor the abundance of young-of-year American eel. The purpose is to characterize trends in annual recruitment over time. Mr. Montane gave a synopsis of the 4 sites included in the current active project. This information is used for stock assessment and management plans. Mr. Hudgins asked if he had asked for half of the funding from the Commercial Board, as has been done in the past. Mr. Montane had not requested funding from the Commercial Board yet, but hoped the 50/50 split would continue.
- 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**. Dr. Vogelbein requested continuing funding for the research. He explained that they have isolated a new and the most common strain, *M. Shottsii*, but the effects on striped bass and human health are currently not understood. There is great concern for the striped bass stocks in Chesapeake Bay. There has been a 20% increase in natural mortality in the last 5-10 years, according to the on-going tagging studies. They do not know the cause of the increase in natural

mortality. There are various hypotheses being researched. Part of this on-going and proposed project is to determine if the infection is increasing the natural mortality and having a negative impact on the Chesapeake Bay stock. He indicated that disease prevalence is high, maybe an average of 70% of the smaller fish, but that varies from place to place around the Bay and tributaries. Whether or not this is having an impact on the stocks, they do not know at this point. Also, there may be 2 distinctive phases of the disease. One phase being the skin ulcers and the other being visceral, or infections of the internal organs like the spleen and kidney. Dr. Vogelbein continued on with a review of the accomplishments of the first year of the study. A brochure, various media and fishermen education presentations have been done to make the public aware of what to do with the fluorescent green-tagged striped bass, and how to contact VIMS. Dr. Hoenig briefly explained that they initially wanted to make sure the stress of tagging was not killing the infected fish. The preliminary results indicate that the fish are surviving. Also, he explained that infected fish do not seem to move out of the tagging area as much as the non-infected fish. He reported over 120 fish have already been returned. This indicates the fish are surviving and the fishermen are cooperating with the research by reporting the tagged fish. They hope that they will be able to see the progression of the infection as the fish are returned in the future. Mr. Randolph asked if they knew which occurred first, the lesions outside or the infection inside. Dr. Vogelbein did not know at this point, but hoped the histopathological analysis would answer that question. Mr. Hudgins asked if the disease was identifiable visually both inside and out. Dr. Vogelbein showed pictures that indicated one could visually identify a heavily infected fish, but light infections may not. Ms. Brown asked about the infected and non-infected fish being penned-up together. Dr. Hoenig indicated that since the infections seems to take a few years to develop and the fish were already together in the wild and captured together that holding them in the pens together may not be a factor. Dr. Vogelbein mentioned that they were looking into other possibilities for holding, since they received funding from Sea Grant for a second pen. Also, since they do not completely know how the fish become infected, whether by water or food or something else, they thought it best to pen them together at this point. Mr. Southall asked whether this project was aimed at identifying the source of the infection, possible preventative measures and potential impact on humans. Dr. Vogelbein said that these were not goals of this study, but other studies are addressing those issues. Mr. Barr asked how many years they would be requesting funding for this particular research. Dr. Hoenig thought that in the request for last year's funding, they indicated they would need a few years of data to complete the study. Depending on whether or not they find that this infection is a major source of striped bass mortality, would determine whether additional requests for funding would be made. They are trying to obtain funding from other sources, as well as the recreational funds. Mr. Barr also recommended approaching the Commercial Board for funding of this project. Mr. Rhodes asked Dr. Hoenig and Dr. Vogelbein to explain the travel and fish purchase listed as line items in the budget. Dr. Vogelbein explained the importance of getting the entire fish returned to VIMS as fresh as possible. Fresh, but not frozen, fish may require a purchase or day/night/weekend travel.

New Projects.

- G) Visual Function in Chesapeake Bay Sport and Prey Fishes: Summer Flounder, Bluefish, Cobia, and Atlantic Menhaden. A. Horodysky, R. Brill, R. Latour VIMS. **\$44,279**. Mr. Horodysky thanked the Board for funding provided for his current visual function study on striped bass, weakfish, spotted seatrout, Atlantic croaker, spot, and red drum. He mentioned that while making presentations to angling groups on his current project, he was asked about what summer flounder, bluefish and cobia see. That prompted him to submit this research proposal, as well as include Atlantic menhaden as a prey fish. The proposed project is a 2 year study because of the upkeep of the species involved. The study tests for the color, speed and size that the eye may see, as well as the direction in relation to the retina. The benefit to the recreational angler is to have more informed choices as to lure color and design, when targeting certain species under certain fishing conditions. The benefit to the scientific community would be a better understanding of competing predators and predator-prey relationships for the development of better visual encounter rate models. The models may be used to develop fisheries management measures. He plans to use 6-10 animals per species, using some of the same equipment and techniques he is using for his current project. Mr. Horodysky went on to review some of the information gained from his current project. All the information will be made available through reports, brochures and club presentations.
- H) 2006 Sunshine Children's Fishing Program. Denny Dobbins, Portsmouth Angler's Club. **\$6,954**. Mr. Dobbins mentioned that he has been involved with the Sunshine program for about 9 years, though this type of program has been in existence for 31 years. The program has expanded over the years. Great Bridge and Norfolk Angler's clubs also participate in providing support for this event. This year they plan 4 headboat trips in July with 30-40 people per headboat. Also, 1 pier trip of 100-160 children for those unable to go on a boat or choose not to. During the month of June, the clubs provide 4-8 educational fishing sessions for the Salvation Army volunteers and children.
- I) Ocean View Bay Savers Fishing Pier. Lauren Campsen, Principal, Ocean View Elementary Maritime School. **\$108,614**. Mr. Charles Hughes, Marine Resource Teacher for Ocean View Elementary School, explained the importance of teaching the children about the Chesapeake Bay, conservation, species identification and fishing techniques. Ms. Jane Bolling, also from Ocean View Elementary School (School), and Mr. Hughes showed pictures to the Board of the proposed site for the Bay Savers Fishing Pier. The City of Norfolk provided a picture of the site with an overlay of the proposed pier. Mr. Hudgins asked what body of water the site is located on. Ms. Bolling indicated that it was called Pretty Lake. Mr. Hughes pointed out that the site was ideal because the Recreational Center was run by the City of Norfolk and serviced about 5000 children and adults in the area. The Center already had parking, picnic, classrooms and restroom facilities available. Ms. Bolling also mentioned that there was no other public pier in the area. They wanted a pier where the children, as well as the community, could fish, learn, monitor water quality and maintain their oyster floats. There is a privately owned public pier in Ocean View,

but nothing open to the public without a fee. Mr. Hughes said they have an agreement with the City of Norfolk to maintain the pier for years to come. Ms. Brown asked them if there was a fee to use the pier. Mr. Hughes said there would not be a fee to use the pier. Ms. Brown commented that this project may need to be divided into 2 separate projects, one being the pier and the other being the educational project. Mr. Randolph asked if they had approached the owners of the new Ocean View Pier to see if they would partner with the School. Mr. Hughes said that they had not spoken to the new owners. The plan was for the School to use the pier when in session and the Recreational Center to use it for daily fishing programs in the summer months. Ms. Brown asked how far the school was from the Center. Ms. Bolling thought it was less than 5 miles, but would still require that the children be bused to and from the Center. Ms. Brown asked where the hired positions, listed in the budget, would work. Mr. Hughes and Ms. Bolling told the Board that they needed people at the Center to train leaders and teachers about fishing, monitoring projects, safety and other elements. Mr. Rhodes asked if they were part of the Norfolk School System and whether they had written endorsement from the School Board. Mr. Hughes let the Board know they were with the Norfolk School System and had the support of the School Board but did not have anything in writing. They would provide the documentation later. Mr. Rhodes commented that he thought the School Board/City could do the design work for less than the expense listed in the proposed budget and also thought this might be 2 separate projects. Mr. Barr commented that expenses for oyster float upkeep were also included in the budget, and that was not really the focus of this Board. Mr. Southall asked about the partnership between the School and the City and asked what type of long-term commitment the City has agreed to and why there was not written documentation included in the proposal. Mr. Wayne Webster, from the City of Norfolk, was in attendance and indicated that something in writing could be provided to the Board. Mr. Barr asked about the expense listed in the budget for bus travel and whether that was for water quality activities, fishing or both. Ms. Bolling indicated that the expense was for both types of activities per trip. Ms. Brown asked about the reference to Del Mar Shores on the spreadsheet in the proposal package. Ms. Bolling said this was Pretty Lake and that spreadsheet heading was incorrectly listed. Mr. Duell commented that the Board was trying to help the applicants by asking these questions, as well as determine whether some of the items are things the Board should be funding.

- J) 2006 Early Summer Children's Fishing Program. Charlie Johnson, Northampton County Angler's Club. **\$1,100.** Mr. Johnson explained that they accept applications from all middle school aged children in lower Northampton County to participate in a 1 day fishing trip. The trip is on a headboat out of Cape Charles. The trip is free to the students, and they learn fishing techniques, conservation and sportsmanship, while having some fun. Lunch is also provided at the end of the day for the students and their parents. The headboat can accommodate 30 children. If they receive more than 30 applications, participation becomes luck-of-the-draw.

- K) Using Virginia's Recreational Fishers in a Sea Turtle Tagging Study. Christina Trapani, Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Team. **\$4,600.** Ms. Trapani explained that they would like to train recreational fishers and supply them with kits to tag dead and floating sea turtles. They want to track the movement patterns, decomposition rates and numbers of dead turtles that would normally go unreported. They would teach anglers about the sea turtles and how to identify them. The angler would be expected to call the Response Team before tagging the animal to make sure they are not handling endangered species. The only species anglers may tag is a loggerhead because others are endangered. If they locate a stranded live sea turtle, they would call the Response Team for pick-up. Ms. Brown asked if the anglers were expected to identify the animals. Ms. Trapani explained they would not be and that is the reason for the phone call before tagging. Response Team members could help in the identification process as well as get preliminary information on the condition of the animal. Mr. Rhodes asked where the data would be stored. Ms. Trapani said the information would be stored in the Response Team computer system but quarterly reports would be provided to all those who participate. Currently, they do not have a website, but maybe in the future they could post information. Mr. Barr asked if the Response Team was available 24/7. The Response Team is available 24/7. Mr. Barr commented that anyone participating would have to have a cell phone, to call before tagging. He also commented that the only animal that anglers would be tagging would be dead loggerheads.
- L) Understanding Localized Movements and Habitat Associations of Summer Flounder in Chesapeake Bay Using Passive Acoustic Arrays. M. Fabrizio, J. Lucy, VIMS. **\$134,306.** Dr. Mary Fabrizio began with a brief overview of information they have on summer flounder. Goals of the study are to determine movement and habitat utilization of summer flounder the lower Chesapeake Bay and the variations among size classes. Traditional tagging studies only give you information when tagged and when recaptured but do not show what happened in between. Dr. Fabrizio proposes using the state-of-the-art acoustic tags. Transmitters are surgically implanted in the ventral side of the flounder. Also, an external tag with contact information is attached in case the fish is caught. Receiver arrays will be setup around Gloucester Point Pier, Buckroe Pier and Bluefish Rock. They need to test the distance of transmitter to receiver for recording data, but she thinks it is between 200-400 meters. Some advantages are that data are recorded 24/7 and they continue to receive information for as long as the fish remains at the site. The equipment would be in the water and fish from June 2006 until January 2007. Dr. Fabrizio plans to release about 120 tagged fish, half legal and half sub-legal sized, around the 3 sites. She went on to explain the surgical procedure to the Board. Mr. Randolph asked for more detail on site selection. Jon Lucy explained that the pier sites were selected to complement the data collected through the traditional tagging study, as well as sites where the receiver arrays will stay in place and travel distance from VIMS. Bluefish Rock, the non-structured site, was chosen for distance and keeping the arrays in place, also. Mr. Barr asked about receivers used in previous studies. Mr. Lucy said they were talking with the company to trade in the old equipment for new and thus reducing cost, if possible. The old equipment will not work with the new equipment.

M) Towards Validation of Juvenile Indices of Abundance for Several Fish Species in Chesapeake Bay. R. Latour, C. Bonzek, M. Fabrizio, VIMS. **\$60,916**. Dr. Rob Latour explained that this is a 1 year research project. This would be lab and data analysis, no field work. This project will attempt to validate whether or not the juvenile indices of abundance are indicative of population abundance. The validation will include 5 species, striped bass, summer flounder, weakfish, spot and croaker. The data will come from the various adult and juvenile surveys currently being done by VIMS. The first phase is to cross reference information on the various year classes with the juvenile indices using a statistical modeling approach. The advantage is this is a survey-to-survey comparison. The disadvantage is that they only have information on the adults for the last 5 year, whereas they have some juvenile information back to the 50s. The second phase is to develop a model to estimate recruitment trends. The advantage of this method is that they have 20 years of data to work with and can extrapolate more accurately. Another benefit of this validation project is an opportunity to see if the surveys are collecting what is needed or should modifications be made. The stock assessment models use these surveys for fisheries management measures. We want to base the fisheries management strategies on the best data possible, and this analysis will help determine whether we are.

The next RFAB meeting dates are March 13 for the public hearing and May 8 for the work session and final meetings.

Chairman Hudgins adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.