

**VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
CRAB MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
380 FENWICK ROAD, FORT MONROE, VIRGINIA
VMRC COMMISSION ROOM**

December 3, 2025 -- 4:00 PM

Members Present

Tye Burns
Marshall Cox
J.C. Hudgins
Chris Moore
Bernard “Wayne” Morris
Peter “Pete” Nixon
Tom Powers
Cory Rice
Mark Sanford
John “Ed” Tankard III (chair)

Kenneth Diggs
Johnny Graham
Spencer Headley
Nathan Reynolds

VMRC Staff

John “Jack” Dearstine
Benjamin “Ben” Foster
Alexa Galván
Shakira Goffe
Joe Grist
Adam Kenyon
Brooke Lowman

Lisa Pyle

VIMS Staff
Rom Lipcius

Public

Richard Costin
Taylor Fitzgerald
Lynnee Morris
Rich Murray
Rochelle Seitz

Members Absent

Meeting minutes were prepared by Shakira Goffe.

Opening Remarks and Announcements

4:04 PM

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 PM and minutes from May 29, 2025, meeting were approved by unanimous consent.

I. Terrapin Petition Update

Mr. Adam Kenyon (Acting Chief of Fisheries Management) provided updates on the petition requesting the Commission require terrapin excluder devices (TEDs) in nearshore crab pots. The Commission voted to deny the petition but directed staff to look into TEDs in recreational crab pots. He asked the committee to provide feedback on TEDs in recreational pots and their potential impacts. Suggestions included restricting access to or requiring TEDs in terrapin hotspots, requiring recreational crabbers to tend their pots more frequently, and requiring narrow funnels to crab pots like North Carolina does.

Mr. Tom Powers stated number 1 jimmies would not be able to fit through the terrapin excluders. Mr. Powers suggested treating both fisheries, recreational and commercial, the same to ensure fairness and not solely focus on the recreational fishery.

II. 2025 Blue Crab Fishery

Mrs. Alexa Galván, Fisheries Management staff, provided a brief overview comparing the fishery's performance so far this year to the previous two years.

III. Dark Sponge Law

Mrs. Galván revisited the topic of dark sponge law from the May meeting. She explained that the commission received a request to review the dark sponge dates in relation to the sanctuary closures and asked the committee to share their opinions. Mrs. Galván submitted a request to VIMS for juvenile trawl survey data due to lack of harvest data regarding how many female sponges are being caught or kept. With the data provided from VIMS, it was suggested that continuing the dark sponge prohibition after sanctuary closures may not be beneficial, as effort will move into the tributaries where there are far fewer black and brown sponge crabs. It was proposed by the committee to end the dark sponge law once sanctuaries close on June 1. Dr. Rom Lipcius was supportive of going forward with the proposition.

Mr. Peter Nixon expressed interest in reviewing culling laws and the requirement to cull at the location of harvest. Mr. Cory Rice made the motion to move dark sponge prohibition from June 15 to June 1. Mr. Sanford seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

IV. Lynnhaven Sanctuary Reduction Request

Mrs. Galván introduced the topic as another request deferred from the May CMAC meeting. Mr. Sanford asked that the historic sanctuary 2 opening date be moved from May 16 to June 1, as it was prior to 2008. Mr. Rice suggested that Sanctuary 1B should also be reviewed if changes were being considered for Sanctuary 2. Mr. Sanford emphasized focus on Sanctuary 2 but noted that all sanctuaries could potentially open on June 1. He also suggested sanctuaries 3 and 4 could close year-round to offset increased harvest from sanctuaries 1B and 2. Mr. Sanford made a motion to keep open all sanctuary areas until June 1, excluding sanctuaries 3 and 4, and keeping sanctuaries 3 and 4 closed year-round. Mr. Marshall Cox seconded. This motion was later withdrawn by the maker.

The committee then discussed how such changes might impact the stock and how they could move forward. Dr. Lipcius noted he could not determine the effect of closing sanctuaries 3 and 4 year-round without more information on crab abundance in these areas which are not included in the annual winter dredge survey. Mr. Lipcius stated he would need to go back to review the data. Mr. Chris Moore expressed concern that the stock may not be in good standing and urged caution given the likelihood of additional changes following the stock assessment. Mr. Rice disagreed, stating that crabbers were not seeking to increase harvest but rather redistribute effort from the tributaries. He asked whether another meeting could be held once more information became available. VMRC staff explained the expected timing of the stock assessment and peer review.

Mr. Rice made a motion to table changing sanctuary dates until a CMAC meeting early next year in order to be heard in time for an April Commission meeting. Mr. Powers

seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously

There was a public comment from a recreational crabber; he stated he would like to see more representation for recreational crabbers on the committee.

V. License Waitlist

Mrs. Galván stated that some watermen on the waitlist asked the Commission to reinstate their licenses and the commission requested CMAC discuss it. At the May CMAC meeting, the committee voted to defer the discussion until after the stock assessment results are out next year; the Commission received another request and was asked to review the topic again.

Mrs. Galván provided background on the crab pot license waitlist established in 2008 to reduce the number of crab licenses available annually in response to the population disaster and where the waitlist stands today.

Mr. Moore stated that he thinks they made a great decision to wait until the stock assessment to re-evaluate but emphasized the importance for transfers to be allowed. Mr. Rice agreed and stated the fishery should maintain its current participants in the fishery. Mr. J.C. Hudgins agreed with Mr. Rice stating he feels everyone has an opportunity to rejoin the fishery through buying other licenses. Mr. Powers made a motion to table the topic until the stock assessment is completed next year. Mr. Rice seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

VI. Crab Pot Limit Restoration

Mrs. Galván informed the committee that the commission received public inquiry to resume the pre-2008 pot limits so the agency wanted to bring the topic to CMAC for discussion. She explained that in 2008 all crab and peeler pot limits were reduced as part of 34% reduction in effort. Mrs. Galvan presented data showing that crabbers often report fewer pots in use than their licensed maximums and noted that many trips are limited by factors other than bushel limits. She asked what the committee thinks about returning to the full pot limits if the bushel limits were to stay the same. Mr. Rice recommended waiting until the stock assessment to make a decision. Mr. Tye Burns stated he was not opposed to the idea. The committee briefly discussed how peeler pots would be included and Mr. Grist confirmed peeler pots would be included and addressed in the later discussion. No motion was made, but the committee generally agreed to table the discussion to increase the pot limits until after the stock assessment has been completed next year.

VII. Stone Crabs

Dr. Lipcius presented information on the stone crabs that have been recently found in Chesapeake Bay. He stated he would appreciate assistance from commercial watermen to gather more data about the crabs and asked for anyone who catches a stone crab to contact him and potentially hold the crab for him to pick up. Dr. Lipcius stated that he felt this would be a fun way to bring scientists at VIMS and fishermen together. He explained to the

committee how to identify the crabs and how to report them to him so they would be able to collect the stone crabs.

VIII. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 PM.

DRAFT