

Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Crab Management Advisory Committee (CMAC) Minutes
2600 Washington Avenue, Newport News, VA
VMRC Commission Room, 4TH Floor
Tuesday, March 15, 2016 – 5:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present

Hon. Ed Tankard
Hon Lynn Kellum
Ernest George
Chris Moore
Mark Sanford
Viola West
Donald Porter
Wayne Morris
Tom Powers
Peter Nixon
Marshall Cox

VMRC Staff Present

Ryan Jiorle
Joe Cimino
Jill Ramsey
Rob O'Reilly

Members Absent

Kenneth Diggs
Daniel Dise
Johnny Graham
Ken Smith
Kevin Wade

Others Present

Wayne France
Doug Jenkins
Curtis Jenkins
Roger Parks
Megan Wood
Mike Seebo
Gabrielle Saluta
Beverly Ludford
Mary Ann Cox

Minutes were recorded by Jill Ramsey.

I. Introductions, announcements & approval of minutes

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 pm and 11 members were in attendance. A brief introduction of the committee was done and staff was introduced by Rob O'Reilly. A recording of the minutes can be found on the agency's website. A quorum was met, the Committee voted to approve the June 25, 2015 and the January 5, 2016 minutes.

II. New Business – Blue crab harvest update from the 2015 season

Joe Cimino presented the 2015 crab hard pot and peeler pot harvest summary. The presentation showed that 2015 harvest has picked up from the previous few years. The Committee reviewed the previous closing dates for all gear except hard pots and briefly discussed what that date might look like for this year. Mr. O'Reilly reminded the Committee that this matter will need to be brought before the Commission prior to the July 2016 meeting and reminded the Committee that the Commission will be looking to them for advice on this matter.

The Committee briefly discussed the 2015-2016 Winter Dredge Survey (WDS). Mike Seebo of Vims stated that the Survey was just completed last Tuesday and the data for Virginia is still being worked up. Mr. Seebo stated that the survey data is usually finished by the third week in March and available by the last week of April, to be sent to Maryland DNR to work on the Bay-Wide estimates.

Mrs. Lynn Kellum brought up the discussion of biodegradable panels in crab pots. Commissioner John Bull asked the Committee to look into preliminary ways to begin testing

out these panels. Mr. O'Reilly discussed possible incentives that VMRC might provide for harvesters to test out these panels. Mr. Marshall Cox stated that he believes that waterman would volunteer to test the panels if they were provided by VMRC. VMRC staff will look into the costs of the panels and material that they are constructed with for the next Advisory meeting.

III. Old Business

1. Continue discussion on allocation-based management framework of the blue crab resource in the Chesapeake Bay between the three jurisdictions.

Mr. O'Reilly presented information to the Committee on the possibility of establishing a Bay-Wide allocation in the future. By 2018 all bay jurisdictions have to assess the feasibility of allocation. Mr. O'Reilly discussed with the Committee that the last stock assessment was done in 2011 using data through 2009. There is a lot of skepticism in the bay jurisdictions about the exploitation rate. The reference points we have now are bay wide, and hard to relate them to Virginia data. It might be 2018 before we have another stock assessment.

Mr. O'Reilly started the conversation with the Committee on how Virginia can do better with its accountability. To get the correct data needed, we need to make sure all blue crab harvesters are reporting correctly. He stated that we need better education and outreach to harvesters. Mr. Marshall Cox suggested that outreach through the local waterman groups will be very helpful when it comes to reporting. Mr. O'Reilly asked the Committee to review a handout about the timeline for allocation considerations and think about ways of improving accountability. The Committee will submit any comments to Mr. O'Reilly and he will bring them to the next Goal Implementation Team (GIT) meeting.

2. Discussion on the use of agents in the blue crab fishery

The Committee continued their discussion from last meeting regarding the use of agents in the blue crab fishery. Joe Cimino informed the Committee that last year in 2015 we reached our agent cap of 125 and reminded them that the agent cap could be exceeded due to hardship, which needs to be approved by the Commissioner. There is an overall concern among Committee members that agents are not being used as originally intended.

3. Initiate a discussion of possible management responses to the late April-early May results of the 2015-16 Bay-wide Winter Crab Dredge Survey.

This matter was discussed by Staff and the Committee during the New Business portion of the meeting. The Committee will be sent the results of the WDS as soon as they are published. If the abundance comes back high on either juveniles, females or both then the Committee can discuss areas that could be relaxed. These areas may include pot limits and duration of seasons. Staff reminded the Committee that all regulation changes will have to be brought before the Commission by the June 2016 meeting.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.