

**Virginia Marine Resources Commission**  
**Crab Management Advisory Committee (CMAC) Minutes**  
2600 Washington Avenue, Newport News, VA  
VMRC Commission Room, 4<sup>TH</sup> Floor  
Tuesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 – 5:00 P.M.

**ATTENDANCE**

Members Present

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

Others Present

Wayne France  
Doug Jenkins  
Curtis Jenkins  
Roger Parks  
Mike Seebo  
Gabrielle Saluta  
Mary Ann Cox  
Tim Wivell  
James West Jr.  
Brandon West  
Ty Farrington

Minutes were recorded by Ryan Jiorle.

**I. Introductions, announcements & approval of minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 5:10pm. Rob O'Reilly requested the committee discuss, during new business, how far before the beginning of the season crabbers will be allowed to set all of the crab pot gear except the pound. Law enforcement is willing to allow something like this, as long as it is in the regulations. He also requested the committee review the Baywide Winter Dredge Survey (WDS) results, emphasizing the importance of both juvenile and adult abundance.

**II. New Business**

**1. Review of Baywide Winter Crab Dredge Survey**

Joe Cimino gave a presentation containing the results of the Baywide Winter Dredge Survey, pointing out the rarity of having good abundance of not only juveniles, but also adult females. Marshall Cox asked if it was true that Maryland reported a doubling of its male population, which Mr. O'Reilly said was true, but mainly because the abundance had been so low. Kevin Wade, although unable to attend, had beforehand voiced his concern over the lack of conservation measures for the male population, i.e., male-specific reference points.

Doug Jenkins emphasized an even ratio of males and females is not necessary for sustainability, citing sex ratios for other managed species of wildlife.

## **2. Discussion for management measures and possible changes for July 5, 2016 through July 4, 2017**

Mr. Cox expressed concern over loosening regulations based on one year of high abundance from the WDS, citing the historical drops in abundance that have followed high years. However, he wanted staff's recommendations. Mr. O'Reilly responded by saying he agreed with the interpretation of the historical trends. He supported Mr. Cimino's point from the presentation that years of high estimated abundance do lead to years of high harvest. He said it was biologically feasible to take more male crabs, but that Virginia needs to be aware of how many male crabs Maryland plans on harvesting.

The Hon. Lynn Kellum reminded the committee of an earlier discussion regarding the length and timing of the crab pot season. Mark Sanford suggested changing the season because it does not line up with the market for crabs, as prices are too low currently. Mr. Cox believed the season should be based more on water temperature, and also indicated that Virginia's crabbers can make their best money in the spring and fall. Mr. O'Reilly emphasized the need for a hard date, especially for law enforcement. Mr. Cox suggested March 1<sup>st</sup>-December 15<sup>th</sup>, depending on the status of the winter dredge fishery (avoid overlaps), which Mr. Sanford agreed with, except for supporting the closure to be December 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. O'Reilly said this was not a bad idea, but indicated that the new dates would still have the reduced bushel limit to avoid dangerously large increases in harvest. Ty Farrington emphasized the need for showing conservation equivalency with this plan. He said this could be done by serving the economic needs of the fishery as well, saying that small females are flooding the market and calling for a possible size limit (change?). Despite the lack of a quorum, Mr. Cox expressed a desire to obtain consensus among the present committee members for a March 1<sup>st</sup>-December 20<sup>th</sup> crab pot season. It was "approved" unanimously.

Donald Porter wanted a peeler pot season to go from April 1<sup>st</sup>-October 31<sup>st</sup>. Mr. O'Reilly said April 1<sup>st</sup> could work, but expressed the need to make incremental changes (last season's opening was April 21<sup>st</sup>). He also said it would be necessary to get better reporting on peelers, as the data suggests that Maryland gets much higher peeler harvest. If allocation ends up happening, this better bookkeeping will be necessary to get a fair share. Mrs. Kellum made the point that VIMS might be conducting a study on shedding operations, and that this presented the opportunity to make public engagements regarding reporting. Mr. Porter expressed the difficulty of getting accurate data on those who shed their own crabs, because they don't have the receipt for the number of crabs from structured shedding operations. Mr. Farrington was concerned over the male "walk-in" season in the spring peeler fishery and the mortality. He suggested a minimum size limit on female crabs to get conservation equivalency. Mr. Jenkins says he doesn't see this mortality with his operation; he takes records and carefully observes factors such as salinity. He also said there is still a market for smaller peelers. He said communication needs to be better for when leaders and other parts of the pounds can be set (before the season) to avoid harvesters getting tickets they didn't think they would get. Mr. O'Reilly agreed with this need and hoped to make it clear where staff and law enforcement stand. He wanted to know how long in advance a crabber would need to set all of the gear except for the pound itself. The committee said it depends on weather and number of pounds. Ernie George said two

weeks would be enough realistically. There was unanimous “approval” for a season for all gears other than crab pots to be April 1<sup>st</sup>-October 31<sup>st</sup>, with two weeks allowed before the start of the season to set all gear other than the pound.

Mr. Sanford expressed a desire to see one sanctuary closure date (instead of three, one for each area), especially because of conflict with oyster aquaculture and other uses in the Lower Bay (e.g., Lynnhaven). Mr. O’Reilly said it was unlikely without seeing more years of high abundance, but said possible solutions would be discussed in the future. Mr. Farrington said the crab population is cyclical, largely independent of harvest and restrictions; as a result, these new restrictions don’t appear to help the species, just hurt the economic nature.

**III. Old Business: No Old Business was discussed.**

**IV. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.