

Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Finfish Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) Minutes
2600 Washington Avenue, Newport News, VA
VMRC Commission Room, 4TH Floor
Tuesday, March 17, 2015 – 6:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present

Jeff Deem (Chairman)
Skip Feller
Ernest Bowden
David Agee Proxy for Hon. Ken Neill
Beth Synowiec
Scott MacDonald
Meade Amory
Walter Rogers
Tom Powers (Phone)

VMRC Staff Present

Joe Cimino
Lewis Gillingham
Joe Grist
Rob O'Reilly
Ande Ehlen
Rachael Maulorico

Members Absent

Andy Hall
Russell Gaskins

Others Present

Bob Allen
Susanna Musick
Jan McDowell
Doug Jenkins Sr.
John Brown
Sheldon Arey
David Moss
Joe Underwood
David C. Wahn
Joe Kelly
Will Bransom
Jon Lucy
Wayne L Pollard
Douglas Jenkins
Mike Avery

I. FMAC Introductions; Announcements

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm and a quorum was present with 8 members in attendance. A recording of the minutes can be found on the agency's website.

II. Old Business

a. Discussion: Striped Bass

i. Final recommendations for the 2015 recreational striped bass coastal conservation measures.

Mr. Joe Grist presented the technical committee's approved recreational measures for Addendum IV to Amendment 6 of the Atlantic Striped Bass Interstate Fishery Management Plan (ASMFC). Currently Virginia has the recreational management measure of a one fish possession limit with a 28-inch minimum size for the coastal recreational fishery effective January 1, 2015. Two members of the public commented that striped bass are currently difficult to find in Virginia coastal waters and both individuals endorsed a two-fish possession limit with a 33-inch minimum size limit. They also expressed that this option would be simpler for enforcement by Marine Police Officers and for charter boat captains to follow.

Mr. David Agee motioned, seconded by Mr. Tom Powers, for a recommendation of 1 fish at 28 inches for the recreational coastal fishery conservation measure. The motion failed by vote.

Mr. Skip Feller motioned for a recommendation of 2 fish bag limit with the option of 1 of the 2 fish being a trophy fish over 36 inches for the recreational coastal fishery conservation measure. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Mr. Scott MacDonald motioned and Mr. Meade Amory seconded to recommend to the Commission a 2 fish possession limit with a 33-inch size limit for the recreational coastal fishery conservation measure. The motion passed 5-3-1.

Mr. Grist also presented the ASMFC approved and FMAC endorsed Virginia recreational Chesapeake Bay and spring trophy season options that include:

1. Raise the Chesapeake Bay Recreational Striped Bass Fishery minimum size limit from 18-inches to 20-inches.
2. Raise the Chesapeake Bay, Coastal, and Potomac River tributaries Spring trophy recreational seasons minimum size limit from 32-inches to 36-inches.

The committee endorsed these measures unanimously.

ii. Possession of Commercial Tags and Tagged Striped Bass in the Northwestern Chesapeake Bay Management Area.

Mr. Grist presented staff's upcoming recommendation to the Commission on proposed changes to the management area that will prohibit the possession of any other jurisdictions striped bass tags in Virginia waters unless transiting in tributaries.

- iii. Mr. Rob O'Reilly informed the FMAC that staff will be requesting, by emergency regulation, a one week delay to the striped bass 28" maximum size limit within the Chesapeake Area due to cold weather preventing commercial fishermen from landing their individual quotas.

b. Discussion: Speckled Trout

Update: North Carolina Stock Assessment of Speckled Trout

Mr. Joe Cimino presented final results of the speckled trout stock assessment that measures the health of the Virginia and North Carolina stock of speckled trout. The stock assessment concluded that the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring for all years from 1991 through 2012. The committee discussed forming a subcommittee by May to discuss speckled trout conservation measures in both the commercial and recreational fisheries.

- c. Discussion: Mid Atlantic Fisheries Management Council's Emergency Measure for Blueline Tilefish.

Discussion: Mr. Grist presented current issues in the blueline tilefish fishery that include a poor stock assessment and a movement of fishing effort northward where regulations are less restrictive. The Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council has requested the NMFS to put in place management measures for the Mid-Atlantic Region a recreational possession limit of 7-fish and a commercial possession limit of 300 pounds. Virginia currently has these measures in place.

III. New Business

- a. Update on Summer Flounder commercial and recreational management measures for 2015.

Mr. O'Reilly discussed current events in the summer flounder fishery at commission and council that include reallocation discussions in commercial quotas and the continuance of regional management in recreational fishery management.

The Committee discussed forming a commercial summer flounder subcommittee to discuss current issues in the commercial summer flounder fishery.

- b. Discussion: Defining fish pots

Mr. Cimino presented a current law enforcement issue in the blue crab fishery in which crabbers are fishing additional crab pots by using fish pot/eel pot licenses. Staff has recommended to the commission a 10% fish pot limit of a crabbers licensed pot limit. Staff is currently working on other management measures including defining fish pots. Staff has requested help from pot fisherman for defining fish pots that are used in Virginia for future management measures.

- c. Discussion of spiny dogfish permits

Mr. Chris Walker, a commercial spiny dogfish harvester, requested to the FMAC to consider allowing his wife to transfer a spiny dogfish permit to a fellow commercial fisherman due to medical reasons. The FMAC endorsed the transfer because it fulfills the transfer requirements written in regulation.

Mr. O'Reilly informed the FMAC that permit transfers are now very limited within the fishery and has recommended the Commissioner allow a certain number of temporary transfers per year until latent effort issues are resolved.

IV. Approval of FMAC minutes from November 19, 2014 meeting

Minutes from January 13, 2015 meeting were approved unanimously.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.