

Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Finfish Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) Minutes
2600 Washington Avenue, Newport News, VA
VMRC Commission Room, 4TH Floor
Monday September 19, 2016 – 6:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present

Jeff Deem (Chairman)
Jack Austin
John Bello
Ernest Bowden
Meade Amory
Skip Feller
Scott MacDonald
Tom Powers
Wes Blow proxy for Hon. Ken Neill

VMRC Staff Present

Joe Cimino
Alex Aspinwall
Chris Davis
Lewis Gillingham
MPO Steve Holliday
Samantha Hornsby
Ryan Jiorle
Katie-May Lauman
Jill Ramsey

Members Absent

Andy Hall
Walter Rogers
Robert Weagley

Others Present

Mike Avery
Mark Sanford
Tim Wivell

I. FMAC Introductions; Announcements

The meeting was called to order at 6:04pm. A recording of the minutes can be found on the agency's website.

II. Approval of FMAC minutes from April 18, 2016 meeting

The minutes from the April 18, 2016 meeting were approved 7:0:1. Mr. Tom Powers abstained due to his absence from the April meeting.

III. New Business: Discussion: Mandatory reporting measures for recreational permittees for cobia, tilefish and grouper and trophy striped bass

Mr. Ryan Jiorle gave a brief presentation on recreational and charter reporting for tilefish/grouper, striped bass, and cobia. He pointed out that the recreational reporting participation for these species, despite being in regulation as mandatory for two of the species, is extremely low. Recreational cobia permitting and reporting was voluntary this year, but will be mandatory in 2017. He then presented several ideas on how to get better compliance with reporting these species including: reducing the number of fields required for reporters in order to simplify the forms, implementing punishment for harvesters who don't report, and implementing mobile reporting. He also stated that staff will be sending out a survey to all harvesters that have recreational cobia permits and a subsample of saltwater license-holders to gauge what people do and don't like about the current reporting system and how it can be better. Mr. Jiorle added that the goal is to get more compliance with the reporting of these species while obtaining quality data.

Mr. Mike Avery, from the public, asked if staff has ever cross referenced their tilefish/grouper permit list with the federal list. Mr. Joe Cimino replied that when the permits were first created the feds asked for the list, but haven't since, so it is something to look into. Chairman Mr. Jeff Deem commented that staff and the federal government could cross reference for a few years to see which one seems to be getting better compliance in reporting and go from there.

Mr. Powers stated that in regards to punishment for people who aren't reporting, staff could send out an email and letter stating that the harvester needs to report or they will not be able to get their license the next year. He felt that this type of reporting is meant to disprove or validate the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data. He stated that the only fields we should be collecting are how many trips did the harvester take targeting the species and how many fish did you catch during a trip where that species was harvested. Mr. Jiorle stated that the goal of this reporting is to be on the same level as MRIP, but to also get enough information in order to assess the stocks. Several committee members stated that they would prefer a web application and that the less paperwork we ask of the harvesters the better. Mr. Ernest Bowden expressed the need for outreach and the need for consequences for not reporting. Committee members agreed that a good form of outreach would be to have signs posted at popular docks and tackle shops stating that a permit is required, how to get it, and that reporting is required.

Many committee members agreed that the permits should be per vessel and the captain would be the one obtaining the permit and doing the reporting. Mr. Powers motioned that the committee recommends to the Commission to change the recreational and charter permit for striped bass, tilefish/grouper, and cobia to be a vessel permit or an individual permit. The vessel permit would cover anyone on that vessel and the individual permit would only cover the individual. If you have either permit, you will be required to report. The motion was seconded by Mr. Deem. The motion passed 8:0:1; Mr. Wes Blow abstained.

Many committee members discussed reducing the number of fields currently required to report for these fisheries. Mr. Powers stated that staff should only be collecting the number of fish, only when targeting that species. Mr. Skip Feller added that if you have a federal permit, you have to report everything that you are catching even if it is not a species that has mandatory reporting. He also stated that they do not require length and weight, it is just number of fish. Mr. Lewis Gillingham stated that the lengths and discards will be collected by MRIP during dockside interviews. Several members would like to see the water body field simplified to include a few broad areas. Mr. Jiorle added that these type questions will be addressed in the survey. Mr. Deem stated that committee members may email staff their thoughts on specific reporting requirements. Mr. Powers motioned to standardize and simplify the form for all three fisheries. Mr. Meade Amory seconded the motion. The committee will also like a copy of the simplified reporting form before it is finalized. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. New Business: Discussion: Spiny Dogfish trip limits for the 2016-2017 season.

Mr. Cimino discussed spiny dogfish landings, quota, and trip limits throughout the last couple of years. Mr. MacDonald, who was representing several buyers and some harvesters, stated that it would be a mistake to change the trip limit to 6,000 pounds and that it would cause more effort and end up closing the season earlier, which would make the market fall. He stated that they would like for it to stay at a 5,000 pound trip limit with a 5% tolerance and on March 1st, if the quota hasn't reached 80%, this would trigger the trip limit to increase to 6,000 pounds. Mr. Amory motioned for a 5,000 pound per trip limit with 5% tolerance and if the quota hasn't reached 80% by March 1st, the trip limit would be increased to 6,000 pounds with no tolerance. Mr. Mark Sanford, from the public, asked the committee to consider having the trigger begin on February 15th, instead of March 1st. Mr. Amory amended his motion to Feb 15th. The motion was seconded by Mr. MacDonald. The amended motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Mike Avery, from the public, discussed several future FMAC topics on behalf of the Virginia Saltwater Sport Fishing Association. The topics he discussed included: 1) the new federal blueline tilefish regulations that will be in effect for 2017, which will force VMRC to adjust their regulations; 2) adopting the 1 per person, 6 per boat limit to follow the federal regulations for cobia and not to support co-management with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission; 3) to increase recreational striped bass access in the summer months; 4) to lobby ASMFC to get more of a black sea bass quota; and, 5) to oppose increasing the menhaden quota.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:19pm.