

DRAFT MINUTES
Recreational Fishing Advisory Board (RFAB) Meeting
May 14, 2012

Members Present

George Hudgins - Chairman
Edward Rhodes - Vice-chairman
Carlisle Bannister
Carolyn Brown

H. "Jim" Deibler
J. "Jimmie" Duell
Charles Randolph
Ken Schultz

Members Not Present

Charles Southall

At 7:07 p.m., Chairman Hudgins called the meeting to order.

Ms. Sonya Davis reminded everyone in the audience to sign-in on the attendance sheet and welcomed the new member to the Board, Mr. Ken Schultz. Mr. Schultz was appointed by Commissioner Travelstead a few weeks ago. He is from the town of Accomac and is on the Board of Directors for the Eastern Shore Anglers Club and the Virginia Eastern Shorekeeper organization.

Ms. Jane McCroskey announced that the funding and positions listed in the Governor's Budget Reductions for the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament have now been fully restored back to the Agency. She provided a brief status report of the budget through April 2012. She explained that the report shows a balance of \$1,443,096. This report includes the expenses for the on-going projects and the VMRC obligations for July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013. This high balance is still a result of some past events, such as the Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries license sales audit and systems alignment from a few years ago.

Mr. Hudgins asked for a review of the draft September 12, 2011 RFAB meeting minutes. Mr. Rhodes made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Deibler seconded the motion, and the vote was, 7-0-1 to accept the draft minutes as final. Mr. Schultz abstained, since he was not on the Board at the time of the meeting.

Projects Requesting Expedited Funding.

- A) 2012 Sunshine Children's Fishing Program. Denny Dobbins, Portsmouth Anglers Club. **\$7,100.** Mr. Dobbins provided an overview of the program. In the 35 years of the program, they have provided fishing instruction and opportunities to approximately 9,000 children. This year they will provide a booklet to each child participating to help them identify the fish they are catching and other creatures, such as crabs, which they might see in the Bay. Also, they will have information on the Sunshine Program, the Portsmouth Angler's Club, and the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament's Junior Angler Program. The 2012 program will follow the same format with one pier fishing day in August and multiple head boat trips in July.
- B) 2012 Saxis and Morley's Wharf Fishing Piers Youth Fishing Tournaments (Year 11). Allen Evans, Eastern Shore of Virginia Anglers Club. **\$2,000.** Mr. Bill Creager, ESAC member, provided an overview of the program. They plan to hold the Saxis Tournament on Sunday, June 17th and the Morley's Wharf Tournament on Sunday, October 28th. The

Tournament will follow the same format as in the past, with the children being provided rods and reels, a hot dog lunch, and a few prizes. A large group of volunteers will help teach the children how to fish.

- C) 2012 Youth Developmental "Hooked on Fishing" Adventure (Year 5). B. Hewlett, B. Pride, Virginia Charter Boat Association. **\$12,960**. Mr. Bob Pride provided and overview of the program. It will be similar to the program done last year at the Hampton City Docks. They plan to expand the number to 300 children from the Boy and Girl Scout Troops, as well as some children from other organized youth groups, from the Peninsula and Southside. Costs are higher this year, because of the increase in the number of children, boats, and fuel costs. The date of the event is Saturday, August 18th. Along with charter boats, they will use a few head boats to accommodate the increased number of children and chaperones. They will once again do the essay contest for prizes.
- D) 2012 Hope House & Oak Grove Nursing Home Fishing Excursions and Clinics. J. Stephenson, P. Anderson, Great Bridge Fisherman's Association. **\$5,175**. Mr. Joe Stephenson provided overview of the program. This program takes adults, who cannot care for themselves, out on fishing trips. This year, they plan one pier event, on Wednesday, May 16th, and two boats trips, unless they can locate a larger boat to accommodate all the wheelchairs. The program also provides a fried chicken lunch, chips, and drinks. Also, they provide small prizes to those that catch fish, the largest fish, and the most fish.

Mr. Rhodes made a motion to recommend the funding of all four of the educational programs (Items A, B, C, D) and was seconded by Mr. Deibler. Chairman Hudgins asked if anyone from the public would like to speak on any of the four programs. There was no public comment. The vote to recommend the funding of Items A, B, C, and D passed, 8-0. Ms. Davis will present the funding recommendations to the Commission at the June 26, 2012 meeting.

- E) Virginia Saltwater Fishman's Journal Public Outreach Project. J. Grist, A. Nelson, VMRC. **\$10,000**. Mr. Joe Grist provided a short Power Point presentation. The Journal is a voluntary on-line system, where anglers may store their catch and effort information. The Journal began at the same time that the Marine Sportfish Collection Project started and has been available for five years, but this is the first request for any funding support from the Board. Advertisement to this point has been through presentations to Clubs, State Fair and other public events; on-line advertisement; printed cards; and T-shirts with the Journal logo as a reward for the Marine Sportfish Collection Project. We ask for catch, length of trip, did they keep or release the fish in an easy to use format, and also useable for fisheries management purposes. The angler can control what information is available to others and can search information in their own journal, or search what others have made available to the public. Almost three thousand people are registered to use the site, but over the years, active users of the site have dropped to about only about 42 people. To use the information, the number of active users needs to increase significantly. The amount requested is for three years. The first two years, staff plans to advertise in a local fishing magazine every two months, such as Chesapeake Angler, which covers Virginia, Maryland, and some of the other states; radio announcements, during Fishing Tidewater presented by Don Lancaster, which covers the entire Hampton Roads area; and continue with printed cards to hand out at anglers club meetings and make presentations. The third year would be for an evaluation of the targeted advertisement for the Journal to see if the advertisement increased the participants. There

is a website and Smart Phone version of the Journal with links to valuable information for anglers. Mr. Grist is asking for expedited funding, so they may begin in July 2012. Chairman Hudgins asked if anyone from the public would like to speak on the program. There was no public comment. Some RFAB members complimented Mr. Grist on this innovative Journal design and hoped he would continue to bring new items to the RFAB that would benefit anglers. Mr. Rhodes made a motion to approve the funding and was seconded by Mr. Schultz. The vote passed 8-0. Ms. Davis will present the funding recommendation to the Commission at the June 26, 2012 meeting.

- F) Artificial Reef, Funding for Deployment of Structure 2012-2013. Mike Meier, VMRC. **\$300,000.** Mr. Meier provided an overview of the current reef activities and outlined what he planned for this year, if funded. With past support, the program was able to deploy 5,117 tons of concrete and quarry rock on three reef sites: Windmill Point, Asphalt Pile, and Occohannock. In past years, he was able to get deployment rates around \$12.00 per ton. The most recent deployment rates are around \$78.00 per ton, which seem to be in line with what other states are paying. Fuel costs seem to be the driving factor for the increase. Except for the quarry rock, most of the concrete materials are “materials of opportunity” and are secured at no charge to the program, leaving more funds available for deployments. This request is for the next year of deployments, purchase of materials, if necessary, and program support services, which could include vessel charter, buoy maintenance, or hire additional temporary or hourly help. With Governor’s Budget Reductions, Mr. Meier’s one and only assistant to the program, Mr. Joe Kalista, will no longer be employed, as of July 1. Also, the program will lose \$30,000 of its annual budget. Mr. Meier currently has 10,238 tons of “materials of opportunity” ready for deployment this summer. If that falls through for some reason then he would use the funds to purchase materials for deployment. Chairman Hudgins asked if anyone from the public would like to speak on the program. There was no public comment. Mr. Rhodes made a motion to approve the funding and was seconded by Mr. Deibler. The vote passed 8-0. Ms. Davis will present the funding recommendation to the Commission at the June 26, 2012 meeting.
- G) Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament Continuation and Privatization. Rob Holtz, Virginia Beach. \$208,418. **This item was withdrawn by the applicant, on 5/14/2012.**

Multi-Year Projects for 2012 Renewal.

- H) 2012 Virginia Marine Sportfish Collection (Year 6). J. Grist, J. Cimino, VMRC. **\$10,000.** Mr. Joe Cimino provided an overview of the current and planned activities for the program. This Sportfish Collection program has been in existence, since 2007. This program was started to fill data gaps of certain species that the Biological Sampling Program of commercial fish houses was unable to collect. Tilefish and grouper species have recently been added as collected species. Some fish species, such as spadefish and bluefish, required the addition of a minimum size for donations to be set, so the program would not have bags full of very small fish donated. Prizes, such as T-shirts and hats, are awarded monthly for donated carcass samples that meet the criteria set by the need of the program. Small spadefish and bluefish are easily secured from the commercial fishermen at a very low cost. The data gaps tend to be fish that are primarily recreational fisheries, such as cobia and tautog. Mr. Cimino continued with some Power Point slides showing some of the annual collections and outlined some of the need for this very important information. To date, over 3,000 donations of fish have been made to the program from

1,100 different anglers. Most of the advertisement has been done in tandem with the Saltwater Journal, such as the website, presentations at anglers clubs, posters at the freezer locations, the State Fair, and word of mouth about the program.

- I) *Federal Assistance (Wallop-Breaux) Matching Funds, Federal FY 2013. Rob O'Reilly, VMRC. **\$256,156**. Mr. O'Reilly provided a summary and the benefits to Virginia of the seven research and monitoring projects supported by the VMRC share of the Sport Fish Restoration funds. Twenty-five percent of the fund comes from the State and seventy-five percent comes from the Sport Fish Restoration funding program. The seven projects supported by these funds are: Evaluation of Striped Bass Stocks in Virginia, Tagging and Monitoring Studies; Estimation of Juvenile Striped Bass Relative Abundance in the Virginia Portion of the Chesapeake Bay; Monitoring Relative Abundance of American Shad in Virginia's Rivers; Support of Facilities to Provide Marine Finfish Ageing for Virginia; Chesapeake Bay Multispecies Monitoring and Assessment Program (ChesMMAP); Estimating Relative Juvenile Abundance of Important Finfish in the Virginia Portion of Chesapeake Bay; and Population Dynamics of Grouper and Tilefish. The requested amount is forty-two percent of the State match needed, and the rest of the match is provided by VIMS and the ODU Research Foundation. Many of these projects are required to gather information to monitor and historically compare the health of various fish stocks, and also to collect information so Virginia may provide compliance reports on 19 different species to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). The Sportfish Restoration funds may be used for other recreationally related projects, such as in 2011-12, some funding was provided to the Artificial Reef Program for deployments.

Multi-Year Projects for 2013 Renewal.

- J) 2013 Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 16). Rob Cowling, Newport News Rotary Club and Coastal Conservation Association-Peninsula. **\$6,500**. Mr. Cowling provided an overview of the program. About 250 kids are invited to attend a fishing trip on the James River Fishing Pier. The program provides an educational morning to learn about Bay and what they may catch. The kids are provided rods and reels, T-shirts and hats, and lunch. They partner with the City of Newport News, Parks and Recreation to solicit the various groups of kids around the area, and they also partner with the Kiwanis program to accommodate as many groups as they can. For 2012, the program has been scheduled for Saturday, July 21st. Mr. Cowling indicated that he is finding it more and more difficult to find additional outside funding for the program, and thanked the RFAB members for their continued support of programs like this one.
- K) 2013 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 12). Wesley Brown, Capital District Kiwanis Club. **\$6,500**. Mr. Brown provided a brief overview of the program. This program tries to keep the number of kids between 250 and 275, but they have had as high as 311. In 2011, they only had 235 kids because one of the buses with 45 kids broke down and they could not make it to the James River Fishing Pier. The format of the program is a duplicate of the Saturday Children's Fishing Clinic, but with different groups of kids. Seven Kiwanis clubs from Franklin to Great Bridge partner together to provide a fun and educational fishing day for kids, ages 8 to 12. For 2012, the program has been scheduled for Tuesday, July 24th, starting at 9 a.m.

- L) 2013 Norfolk Youth Head Boat Fishing Trip (Year 2). Ned Smith, Norfolk Anglers Club. **\$1,115**. Mr. Smith provided an overview of the program. The 2012 trip has been scheduled for Monday, July 16th. The proposed program will be the same format as the 2012 program, with the exception of a slight increase of \$105 to cover an increase in fuel costs. They expect to have space for any Board members that wish to attend the fishing trip. The July trip is a half day fishing trip for 40 Ocean View youths, with 10 to 15 volunteer anglers and East Ocean View Community Center staff, to teach the kids how to fish, bait the lines, and remove the fish from the hooks, if successful. The program will also promote the Junior Angler Award Program. The Community Center manager has asked that they bring as many fish back to clean and will have a fish fry for the Center youths. After the fishing trip, the Norfolk Anglers Club members will provide a picnic lunch for the participants at the Community Center.
- M) 2013 Virginia Game Fish Tagging (Year 19). S. Musick, VIMS and L. Gillingham, VMRC. **\$72,392**. Ms. Susanna Musick provided a copy of the final report for 2011 to the RFAB members. The program has existed since 1995, with a concentration of tagging 10 different species. They maintain a group of experienced anglers, around 200, trained in proper catch, tag, release, and data collection practices to increase knowledge of life history patterns for the 10 recreationally important finfish. In 2013, they will focus on providing the tagging equipment to the anglers; provide information on how to collect quality data on tagged fish; maintain the VGFT database; working with taggers on new tags and techniques, which may increase retention and increase recapture rates; provide information on the website and in the final report; explore alternate data dissemination methods for program participants; continue to hold workshops to train new taggers on best practices; and continue providing tagging data to fisheries managers. Ms. Musick continued with providing some highlights of past years. From 2010 to 2011, they have seen a 15.6% increase in the number of overall tagged fish, and 34% increase in recaptures. She feels the success of the program is due to the dedication the anglers provide to the program. She is glad to work with them on a daily basis. Over the last 18 years, 500 anglers have participated as taggers. Mr. Lewis Gillingham clarified that two separate budgets are submitted for this one program, but the combined totals are presented on the cover page of the application. The VMRC budget portion includes the rewards and mailing costs. VMRC staff time is funded through the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament and no additional funds are needed in this budget at this time. Much of the staff time is spent providing feedback, not only to the angler who did a recapture, but also the tagger who initially tagged the fish.
- N) *2013 Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-Year American Eel in the Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay (Yr 12). M. Fabrizio, T. Tuckey, VIMS. **\$51,971**. Mr. Troy Tuckey provided a brief update on the project. Mr. Tuckey indicated that this monitoring project fulfills a mandate from the ASMFC to monitor American eels and has been in existence for 12 years. The coastwide stock assessment bench mark was completed last week and the stocks are being depleted, so they want this survey continued to monitor potential issues for down the road. Wormley Pond and Bracken's Pond are the two sites off the York River. Kamp's Millpond is the Rappahannock River site, and Wareham's Pond is the James River site. In the rivers, feeder streams, and ponds, there are larger and better habitat areas for the eels to migrate to. That is the reason they sample in these locations, rather than closer to the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. This proposal has been submitted to both the RFAB and CFAB for funding review. In the past, the project funding was split with 50% coming from the RFAB and 50% from

the CFAB, but they just submit the whole amount needed in the proposals to both Boards. The Boards and Commission determine the split, not the applicant.

New Projects for 2012.

- O) 2012 Knights of Columbus Annual Kids Fishing Day. Greg Brown, Knights of Columbus. **\$7,968.30.** Mr. Brown provided a brief overview of the program. This program has been supported by the Knights and donations from outside sources for 24 years; however, this is the first funding request from the recreational license fund. This program will take about 200 kids from the Boys and Girls Clubs on a morning fishing trip to the Lynnhaven Fishing Pier, on Wednesday, August 1st. Many of the kids, and also about a third of the volunteers, have never fished, so it will be a learning experience for many involved with the program. Along with learning how to fish the kids and volunteers are provided with a gourmet hot dog lunch. Mr. Rhodes made a motion to approve the funding, with the other expedited projects, and was seconded by Mr. Duell. Chairman Hudgins asked if anyone from the public would like to speak on the program. There was no public comment. The vote passed 8-0. Ms. Davis will present the funding recommendation to the Commission at the June 26, 2012 meeting.
- P) 2012 CICBA Take a Kid Fishing Day. Charlie Koski, Chincoteague Island Charter Boat Association. **\$1,637.** Mr. Koski had a family medical issue and was unable to attend this evening. Mr. Schultz spoke with Mr. Koski earlier in the day and provided some information. The amount requested has been slightly lowered, since the original application. They will work with the Chincoteague School District and PTA to get the kids to the fishing trip. They amended the application to 2013, because they believed they would not be included in the expedited process; however, Mr. Schultz pointed out that Item O was shifted into the expedited category and maybe this program could also be included in the expedited funding. The captains donate their time and expertise and are only reimbursed for the fuel costs. Mr. Schultz made a motion to approve the funding, with the other expedited projects, and was seconded by Mr. Rhodes. Chairman Hudgins asked if anyone from the public would like to speak on the program. There was no public comment. The vote passed 8-0. Ms. Davis will present the funding recommendation to the Commission at the June 26, 2012 meeting.

There was some discussion, if the RFAB could approve the 2012 requests for these six programs (Items A, B, C, D, O, P), and then change the rest of the review cycle to a review of funding for 2013. Ms. Davis will survey the Board members to see what they wish the applicants to do. [Note: Management has decided to return to two RFAB review cycles and do not wish to follow this suggested procedure.]

- Q) Greenbackville Harbor Enhancements. S. Hall, Accomack County, R. Mariner, GMB. **\$225,000.** Mr. Stewart Hall provided a summary to the project. Also, in attendance for the project were Mr. Bob Wright, Mr. Perry Romig, and Mr. Reggie Mariner. This facility was built in the 1980's and general maintenance has been done, but now the ramp, docks, and bulkhead are nearing the end of their useful life. The County has accumulated \$125,000 and the Virginia Port Authority (VPA) has pledged \$150,000. They also have an addition request in to the VPA for another \$150,000, but they have not heard what the status is. This facility does promote recreational and commercial saltwater fishing, by providing access to Chincoteague Bay, other seaside areas, and the Ocean. This harbor and channels are still being dredged by the Army Corps of

Engineers, even with their cut-backs, so that is a plus for this location. They have pursued other funding sources, such as the Federal Aid, Boating Infrastructure Grants (BIG). But those grants are more for vessels 27 feet or larger and restroom fixtures. Mr. Rhodes also suggested that they begin the Joint Permit Application (JPA) process now, rather than wait until October, as listed on the project timeline. Also, Mr. Rhodes made them aware of some ADA changes that may have changed over the last year. The use of the boat ramp is approximately 95% recreational and 5% commercial. However, the overall use of the entire facility is more of a 50% to 50% split. There are no fees to use the boat ramp, but they do charge for slip rentals. The Harbor Committee, on behalf of the County, collects the fees for the slip rentals, which cost around \$300-\$350, and run the day to day operations of the facility. This is a two phase project, where the first part is mainly in the area around the boat ramp. Later, they plan to replace the bulkhead and piers for the rest of the facility. The parking area can accommodate 30-35 vehicles, including trailers.

- R) Chincoteague Historic Bridge Fishing Pier. K. Edwards, R. Ritter, Town of Chincoteague. **\$129,083.** Mr. Robert Ritter provided a summary of the proposed conversion of the bridge to a fishing pier. The old bridge fender extends approximately 160 feet into the Chincoteague Channel, which provides some prime fishing area for children and visitors. This fishing pier is part of a downtown master plan for the Town. There is a public park adjacent to the area of the proposed fishing pier. They began the procedure for the Joint Permit Application (JPA) about a year ago. They could not start any construction, until American Bridge Company completed the new bridge for VDOT and they were very slow with that process. VDOT has processed the transfer of the bridge fender to the Town. Mr. Ritter is just waiting for the deed from VDOT to complete the transaction. Mr. Ritter explained some of the diagrams in the application. With the bridge fender already in place for a foundation, if funded, this project would add the wood pier over the fender and provide lighting. At one of the other public fishing piers, they allow fishing from sunrise to midnight, and Mr. Ritter indicated that they would probably follow the same time period for this fishing pier. The Army Corps has recommended that the Town discourage fishing off of the end of the pier, using signage and/or fencing, so anglers will not cast out into the channel.
- S) Genetic-based Investigation of Blueline Tilefish and Snowy Grouper Stock Structure (Year 1 of 2). J. McDowell, J. Graves, VIMS. **\$74,155.** Ms. Jan McDowell provided a summary of the proposal. The reason they wish to do the study is because the blueline tilefish and snowy grouper have become more of the focus for the deep drop fishery off the coast of Virginia, in the last few years. Currently, these species are managed by the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC) and North Carolina was thought to be the extent of their northern range. Virginia falls out of the management range; however, Virginia has set some regulation to protect the tilefish and grouper species. Both of the species are long lived, slow growing, and late to mature, which makes them susceptible to rapid depletion. Also, they live in localized aggregations as adults, so with today's technology, a population is more easily wiped out in a particular area. You capture these fish below 240 feet, so they are not good for catch and release, because they do not survive the release. Blueline studies, done off North Carolina in 2004 and 2009, have shown major changes in age structure and sex ratios in a short period of time, due to overfishing. Snowy grouper have an additional layer that could cause problems for the stock in that they begin life as females, maturing between three and seven years, and change to males. No males have been found under age seven. Snowy groupers were

researched off the North Carolina coast in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, and the evidence of males dropped from 22.9% to 1.9% of the population. This large drop in the larger and older male fish could have a significant impact on the stock structure. They are a high risk for overexploitation and can easily be overfished. There is no genetic information on the blueline tilefish or snowy grouper and this is why they are requesting funding to do this research. If no genetic information exists then they have no information on the connectivity of the stocks in different areas. We do not know if stocks off the Virginia coast are self-populating; or if our stocks must rely on the recruitment from different areas; or if Virginia stocks are increasing the populations of other areas. Once they can get baseline information on the population, they can monitor what happens in the future. They want to ascertain genetic diversity of the fish from Virginia all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico. This is a chance to be proactive on more of a virgin fishery by monitoring the genetic diversity and maintain the diversity that we currently have. All the data will be made publically available. They already have some samples from the Virginia Marine Sportfish Collection program and hope to continue to receive samples from that program. Also, they have partners in other regions that will assist with the collection of sample fish for this study. Fish from other areas are needed, so they have something to compare the Virginia fish to. Ms. McDowell indicated that the blueline and snowy grouper were selected rather than other species, such as wreckfish, because these were newer fisheries, somewhat virgin stock, and would be good species to get some baseline data. Ms. McDowell also explained that they have no control on when or if they are given a salary increase, so they plan for a possible increase of 5% in the estimated budget.

- T) Fish Away from Whales Angler Outreach Project (Year 1 of 2). Mark Swingle, Virginia Aquarium Foundation. **\$76,151**. Ms. Susan Barco explained that when the weather is warm, they do see whales, as was seen this past winter. They believe the whales pass back and forth between Virginia and North Carolina. The large number of calls they received last winter from the press, NOAA enforcement, and the public, is what prompted the submission of this proposal. The Marine Mammal Protection Act considers fishing or boating close to whales, or any marine mammal, as harassment. The intent of this proposal is to educate the public on what to do, if a marine mammal, such as a whale, moves into their fishing area. There are established whale watching guidelines, whether it is intended or not. There are steps that one needs to do if whales approach to avoid hitting, getting gear tangled around them, or causing the whales to change their behavior. The intent of the proposal is to educate the public, so they do not get into trouble on the water. The Aquarium is funded by a public/private partnership, with the Research and Conservation Division, part of the non-profit foundation, funded by private donations, grants, and contracts. In Virginia, there have not been documented cases of human injury or enforcement action taken; however, NOAA enforcement has contact the Aquarium staff about things seen last winter, and NOAA enforcement is concerned about the interactions in Virginia waters. Ms. Barco was aware of some enforcement activity in the Massachusetts Cape Cod Bay area. The idea is to modify the northeast boating brochures and information on the “see a spout” program, and to modify that program to target the mid-Atlantic anglers. In Virginia, the people on the water in the winter tend to be anglers and not just recreational boaters. They plan to educate anglers on how to spot, mainly whales, and how to give way to any marine mammals entering the area. The TidalFish website had a posting about one individual that moved toward the whales, rather than move away, like others were doing. That post, which others in the media picked up on, generated some discussion on this issue. The outreach of this project will target Virginia

anglers, but if additional funding is secured they would also consider expanding the program into North Carolina.

New Project for 2013.

U) *Cooperative (VMRC, Va. Tech, ASMFC) Efforts to Utilize Alternative Methods for the Upcoming Stock Assessment of Weakfish. R. O'Reilly, VMRC, Y. Jiao, VPI, P. Campfield, ASMFC. **\$20,000.** Mr. Rob O'Reilly reminded the Board members about their previous support of weakfish research and how much everyone involved in the process appreciated their support. The previous projects provided some very important information on the status of weakfish. The weakfish stocks are heavily depleted, but other species, such as Atlantic croaker, have been in the same situation and the data assisted managers in making informed decisions on how to proceed. Weather issues and heavy predation are also some of the problems facing weakfish. Recruitment of weakfish has been fairly good over the years, but when you go to find one-year olds, there are not that many. The purpose of this project is to follow-up from where Dr. Jiao's previous work left off. The models are now used in the ASMFC process and Dr. Jiao is part of the Stock Assessment Sub-committee for weakfish. The request is \$20,000 from the recreational fund, \$30,000 from the ASMFC, and \$10,000 from Virginia Tech. They want to take Dr. Jiao's work and put it to use in the next weakfish benchmark stock assessment in 2014. During a benchmark stock assessment, new methods are tried. The ASMFC definitely wants to use the methods that Dr. Jiao has developed. To rebuild a stock, you need guidelines to follow, such as: what is a safe amount of abundance, biomass, or spawning biomass; and you need to know the fishing mortality or exploitation. Dr. Jiao has looked at the fisheries independent surveys done by the coastal states and has shown that the data needs standardizing for inclusion in an assessment. She has been able to standardize the information. She was also able to work with natural mortality information. The planned start for this proposal is January 1, 2013. If funding is available in the commercial fund, he will pursue some of the \$20,000 from that fund. Having our state in the lead with the ASMFC process is very important and other states may want to participate, as well, as this goes forward.

The dates for the next RFAB meetings of this review cycle are July 9 and September 10.

Chairman Hudgins adjourned the meeting at 9:47 p.m.

[Note: * Indicates the project is also under review by CFAB/MFIF.
Audio files of the meeting are available at <http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/vsrfd/index.shtm> (Choose, Current Proposals, on the left-hand menu)]