

Meeting June 2, 2016 Lynnhaven River Workgroup

Ken Neil brought the meeting to order about 6:05 PM at VMRC headquarters in the Commission meeting room.

1. Notification process discussion. It was noted that the notification process is flawed and could be improved, but what about areas already leased. Should there be a notification process and mechanism to allow public comment and the ability to prohibit the placement of cages. This would require some type of permit. A use plan in association with a request to place cages could be a solution. Possible recommendation that current leaseholders put cages but restrict the depth of water without a more robust authorization process or a setback requirement much like zoning requirements. Distances to buffer shoreline of 100 to 210 feet (settled on 150 feet) from mean low water and require notification if structures are being proposed on a lease and if the adjoining property owner objects then no cages allowed in the buffer area. Discussion of whether to require existing cages to be removed if a land owner now objects, but this was deemed problematic.
2. Lease marking and marking of aquaculture structures. It was noted that sign requirement needs to better notify the public of the danger. Signs should say something better than aquaculture structures. This idea was universally agreed upon. Staff noted that alternate language is now allowed. Perhaps marking rules in Virginia Beach should be different. Commissioner noted that this group is charged with looking at the Lynnhaven River system, but any recommendations could have statewide impact. It was suggested that sanctuary reefs be buffered at least 25 feet or 50 feet for either leases.

Next meeting, talk about use plan at a minimum.

Open for public comment. Mrs. Ludford spoke and provided information about her lease and the need to work her lease in the shallow water habitat. She noted that she just wants to farm her grounds and be a good steward of the area.

Chris Ludford spoke about depth issue, Commission representation has historically had representatives from Virginia Beach who were property owners and represented land owners and recreational users. He noted that his application is one of the main reasons this group was created. He reiterated that he is more than willing to sign a document that he will not place structures on the lease if granted. He noted that no wake zones are needed and that the area is already overrun with boaters to the detriment of safety to all. He believes the current system works well to address protests and the system should be allowed to work as it exists.

Robert Federor noted that he is a property owner and he was unaware of the lease process and the leaseholder that used the lease and made a mess of his "back yard". There are about 20 cages in the area and he can live with that and noted that he believes it adversely impacts property values. Notification process is flawed.