

FINAL MINUTES
RFAB PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION
March 8, 2004

MEMBERS PRESENT

Edward Rhodes
Charles Randolph
Jesse Duell
Jim Deibler
Carolyn Brown
Carlisle Bannister
John Barr
Andy Ligon
George Hudgins

At 7:02 pm, chairman George Hudgins called the meeting to order.

Chad Boyce presented Carolyn Brown with some details regarding her recent state record Striped Bass. He presented her with age and growth information that was provided by Old Dominion University, and he also gave her one of the otoliths from her state record fish.

Mr. Hudgins asked for the status of the Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund. Jane McCroskey of VMRC stated there will be \$1,280,162, available for projects in 2004, which is \$353,334 less than what was projected in November of 2003. She provided details for the low projection.

Mr. Hudgins then asked for approval of the minutes from the January 12, 2004 meeting. Mr. Bannister made a motion to approve the minutes, and Mr. Deibler seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously to approve the draft minutes.

Public Comment: Please note that most of the CCA comments were reiterations of the association's written comments, listed in Appendix 1.

Multi-Year Projects for Renewal

A. Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic

Larry Snider of the CCA spoke in support of the project, but asked for the applicant to look at ways of reducing overall costs in the project. Rob Cowling also spoke in support.

B. Wallop-Breaux Match

Larry Snider of the CCA spoke in support, he added that the CCA would like to request the current Wallop-Breaux projects to be placed on the VSRFDF website. Mr. Ligon reiterated Mr. Snider's request.

C. VMRC Artificial Reef Program

Jim Haydon of the CCA spoke in support.

D. Monitoring American Eel Relative Abundance

Larry Snider spoke for the CCA and did not support the project. Marcel Montane of VIMS stated this project is an ASMFC mandate. Ms. McCroskey addressed the RFAB and stated the CFAB could not add funding to this project since all the commercial monies were utilized in the Mandatory Reporting Program. Some discussion followed on future funding options for this project.

E. Chesapeake Bay Trophic Laboratory

Jim Haydon of the CCA spoke with partial support for the project. He added that funding should also come from the CFAB.

F. Withdrawn

G. Boat Scarring Effects, SAV

Larry Snider of the CCA spoke in support of this project. Mr. Ligon asked Dr. Orth about the locations of his SAV transplant beds. Dr. Orth responded that he was targeting areas with little or no SAV.

H. Enhancing SAV Habitat

Larry Snider of CCA spoke in support. Dr. Bob Orth briefed the RFAB on status of the SAV restoration work he is doing.

I. Smith Landing Improvement

Tom Sheppard of York County Board of Supervisors spoke in support of this project, and he stated that York County is prepared to award a contract if the RFAB approves the project. He also stated that Smith Landing would be a no-cost ramp for all users. Jack Christie, David Agee and Linda Stoney all spoke in support of the project. Mr. Rhodes asked Tom Sheppard to prioritize the needs of the project, Mr. Sheppard responded that the ramp was the highest priority followed by the pier then the parking lot. Discussion followed about the ramp not being currently ADA approved. Mr. Randolph inquired about the shape of the ramps. Mr. Sheppard responded by saying the ramps were in need of repair due to cracked concrete and the angle of the ramp.

J. Cultured Cobia, VIMS

Larry Snider stated the CCA did not support this project, but asked for it to be deferred to the next funding cycle. Dan Sennet of VIMS addressed the concerns of the CCA. Mr. Deibler asked if VIMS had sought federal funds. Mr. Randolph asked that VIMS provide information to the RFAB showing they had applied for funding from other sources, not just the RFAB.

K. Withdrawn

L. Effects of Longnose Gar on Juvenile Gamefish, VIMS

Jim Haydon of the CCA stated they did not support this project since Longnose Gar are predominantly a freshwater fish. Pat McGrath of VIMS stated that all of this research would be on gar from brackish water areas.

M. Withdrawn

N. Buckroe Pier

Cindy Martel of the City of Hampton addresses the RFAB and presented an amended budget for the Buckroe Pier project. She informed the RFAB that two sites are being examined for the pier, a new site and the original pier site. Wayne Herring, Bill Kennedy and Jerry Jones all spoke in support of the project. Mr. Rhodes asked if Hampton had applied for FEMA funds. Cindy Martel stated that the funds were not available for the private pier. He also asked if Hampton had applied to the VMRC Habitat Management Division for the required permits. Cindy Martel stated they had not applied yet, but were planning to. Loreen Press of City of Hampton addressed the board and stated that the permitting process could take as long as 18 months. Mr. Rhodes then summarized that no site had been selected, permits had not been applied for, and a firm had not been selected to complete the A&E study. Mr. Hudgins added that an incremental approach might be examined by the city. Discussion followed. Mr. Barr asked the City about the matching funds, specifically the “cash” was the City going to contribute. He stated the matching funds were just the assessed value of the land, not a hard dollar figure. He concluded by asking the City for a breakdown of the \$200,000 that is to be used as construction costs. Larry Snider of the CCA spoke in partial support of the project, stating that the City needed to provide details to the RFAB.

O. Mill Creek

Grace Hall and Jim Haydon spoke in support of the project. Phil Lownes addressed the RFAB. He briefed the board on the problems at Mill Creek. He estimates approximately 3000 cubic yards of sand on the ramp. He also stated that DGIF has \$26,000 in FEMA funds and \$25,000 in DGIF monies that will go toward the project. He also stated the funds will only be used for the dredging and the groin construction.

P. VDGIF Saltwater Fishing Access Improvements

Larry Snider of the CCA spoke in partial support of the project. Phil Lownes answered questions about the project and stated this request was for matching funds. Mr. Ligon inquired about the maintenance programs of the counties where the projects were located, and specifically who was doing the maintenance. Phil Lownes stated the VDGIF had a heavy maintenance program and had not been sued since the program was initiated.

Q. Withdrawn

R. and S. Eastern Shore Anglers Children’s Tournaments

Mr. Bill Mariner presented on behalf of the Eastern Shore Anglers Club. He is requesting \$1,000 for each project to provide t-shirts, prizes, and food for the children.

T. Sunshine Program, Youth Fishing Tournament

No one spoke in favor or opposition of this project.

At 9:05 pm Mr. Hudgins adjourned the meeting.

Appendix I

The CCA of Virginia Fisheries Management Committee has reviewed the proposals submitted to your board and has formed the following positions.

Multi-Year Projects for Renewal:

A. 2004 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic. \$5,270. **SUPPORT.** We have a long-standing record of supporting this and other similar projects that expose children to the fun and educational benefits that derive from the angling experience. However, we request the petitioners explore additional ways of reducing the cost of conducting these events. For example, this event appears to be aimed at servicing a lesser amount of children than a couple of other similar events that proportionately cater to larger numbers of children at a lower cost per participant. Simply, we recommend alternatives be considered to reduce equipment and facility rental.

B. Federal Assistance Match (formerly Wallop-Breaux). \$154,662. **CONDITIONAL SUPPORT.** Our support is given with the same stipulations we voiced in a similar request that was made in 2003. Since our concerns were not addressed last year we must echo them all the more this cycle. Simply, we support this action **only** if: (1) the RFAB participates in the administration/allocation of the funds, (2) there is a corresponding public accounting of these funds, i.e. a breakdown of spending, and (3) the spending by project is portrayed on the VMRC website. Again, this funding should be withheld if the VMRC does not agree to the above conditions.

C. 2004 Funding Support for Virginia's Artificial Reef Program. \$200,000. **SUPPORT.** The construction of artificial reefs in bay and near shore waters epitomizes the intent for which this fund was intended. Consequently, we enthusiastically support the project, and understand the necessity to have adequate funds available to enable the project manager to quickly acquire and place reef materials as they become available.

D. Monitoring Relative Abundance of Young-of -year American eel, in the Virginia Tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. \$24,254. **DO NOT SUPPORT.** We did not support this project last year and our position remains unchanged in that this effort does not directly benefit mainstream saltwater Virginia anglers. The fact that eels are just one of many forage species on which striped bass feed, does not in itself justify support to the project. As we noted last year, eels are a species of growing commercial interest. Consequently, funding for this and other related projects on eel research should first be sought from that sector.

E. Establishment of a Chesapeake Bay Trophic Interaction Laboratory. \$94,000.

PARTIAL SUPPORT. Our comments of last year are still consistent with our position this year. We agree with the overriding principal of this proposal that future effective fisheries management will require a much greater understanding of the trophic interactions of fishes in our region. The establishment of this program represents an important early step in garnering this understanding. However, the commercial industry can potentially reap equal rewards from this approach, and should thus bear 50% of the cost of this proposal.

F. MRFSS Study Update. \$100,000. N/A. WITHDRAWN.

G. Boat Scarring Effects on SAV (year 5). \$14,137. SUPPORT. As in previous funding cycles we support this final year of the project. We continue to believe this study should form the basis of management measures that would protect key areas of SAV from the harmful effects of certain activities. This project is indirectly tied to other efforts to restore and expand areas of grass beds. Consequently, without adequate SAV protection, the restoration of grass beds will never achieve bay-wide success. Our greatest concern revolves around the extremely negative response from the VMRC when the petitioner presented some very powerful preliminary findings. In return for the considerable longstanding financial support of this project, we expect the petitioner to provide a definitive and pointed presentation to the VMRC that will include specific recommendations to correct the degradation by the offending parties/practices. We expect the results of this study to provide irrefutable evidence that the VMRC will not, in good conscience, be able to ignore.

H. Enhancing SAV Habitat: Research and Education for Restoration. \$97,080.

SUPPORT. Again, we have supported this critical SAV project through prior funding cycles. While our support to the effort remains steadfast, we continue to feel the commercial sector must bear an equal financial cost in SAV restoration. Therefore, if commercial funds are not forthcoming for this effort, then the restored areas should be declared off limits to all forms of commercial fishing.

New Projects:

I. Smith Landing Waterfront Improvements Project. \$525,750. PARTIAL SUPPORT-DEFER PORTION OF FUNDING TO NEXT CYCLE. The overall scope of this project is noteworthy and we agree that it should be undertaken, even though RFAB funding may not be fully available this cycle. Consequently, we recommend that initial funding for this cycle be focused on the boat launching ramp/courtesy dock portions of the package. However, if the board determines there are adequate funds at this time, then we would concur with additional allocations for the project. We feel the priorities for this project are: #1 – boat launching ramp/courtesy dock, #2 – replacement of the existing fishing/crabbing pier, and #3 – parking lot expansion and improvements.

J. Cultured Cobia as a Tool for Life History Studies and Potential Stock Enhancement Projects. \$90,139. DO NOT SUPPORT, CONDITIONALLY DEFER UNTIL NEXT CYCLE. While we have supported several cobia research projects in the past, this

particular effort raises questions regarding applicability to the recreational fishing community. Lacking a specific breakdown of program costs by category, we do not support the project as currently proposed. If the intent of the project is to focus on the restocking of fish to augment natural bay reproduction and to garner research directly pertinent to the management/conservation of the species, then we would be favorably disposed to support a more clearly stated program in the near future. Even then, any approval of such an effort should be contingent on the cost of an annual stocking program. However, as presently constructed, we have concerns that the primary benefits of this research could be equally directed to the commercial aquaculture of the species. If this were the case, then it would be inappropriate for this project to receive financing from the license fund.

K. Paradise Creek Park Development. \$233,000. N/A, WITHDRAWN.

L. Effects of Longnose Gar on Local Juvenile Gamefish Populations. \$9,724. **DO NOT SUPPORT.** As this species is both primarily an inhabitant of fresh water and of no significant recreational value, it is not a valid candidate for consideration of saltwater license fund resources. While it may be a predator species of juvenile striped bass, such predation could at best account for only a minimum of the overall mortality of striped bass. Thus, even though the funding request is relatively minimal, it is not an appropriate project for this fund.

M. Norview Marina Ramp Lease. \$28,600 annually and \$15,000 start-up. N/A, WITHDRAWN.

N. Buckroe Park Fishing Pier. \$1,013,757. DO NOT SUPPORT – DEFER UNTIL NEXT CYCLE. We are confident we can support this project, in a revised form, in the near future. However, we believe it is premature to fund it during this cycle due to the existence of several unresolved issues. While the newly revised budget request was not yet available, there are other concerns including some apparent uncertainty over the exact location of the facility. However, our current hesitancy should not be construed as being non-supportive of the effort by the city of Hampton to build a high quality fishing pier. To the contrary, we feel this project, if properly pursued, will afford the Peninsula with an outstanding recreational facility, while also providing the city of Hampton with a potentially significant, and profitable “destination” attraction. In other words, a tourist attraction that can effectively complement a host of other initiatives the city is undertaking to redirect visitation to the city. We will enthusiastically provide our support to this project, hopefully during this year’s second cycle, when the major outstanding issues have been resolved.

O. Mill Creek Boat Landing. BEING REVISED. CONDITIONAL SUPPORT. We share the desire to see this ramp become fully operational. As we pointed out last summer when this package was initially submitted, this project has merit in providing angler access to a region with relatively few such areas. However, we still have some concern over the ability of the proposed bulkhead extension to adequately control the littoral drift at the site. The engineering study should also entertain the possibility one of

the bulkheads may actually be increasing the rate of siltation. It is clear the drift into the ramp can truly be controlled by the proposed solutions, then the board should give a “green light” to this needed ramp.

P. VDGIF Saltwater Fishing Access Improvements. BEING REVISED. PARTIAL SUPPORT. Within the context of this request we support enhancement only to those areas that are truly “saltwater” locations. We are concerned the funds not be diverted to other uses. Thus, we feel the agency should provide a project by project accounting of the cost of repairs/maintenance for the past year as well as future years. It is vital for the integrity of the fund that the first report be provided to the RFAB prior to approval of this project in May, and that any future funding be contingent upon the agency providing an annual report. This request is not inconsistent with the standards applied to other users of this fund. Additionally, this report should be posted on the Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund web page.

Q. Wishart's Point Landing Project. \$321,926. N/A, WITHDRAWN.

As always, we appreciate the opportunity to express our views on the disbursement of our state's license funds. We also look forward to sharing our thoughts in person at the September public hearing session of the VRFAB.

Thank you for your consideration.