

**VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION  
FINFISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
VMRC CONFERENCE ROOM  
February 15, 2005**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. William Burruss  
Mr. Kelly Place- proxy for Mr. Douglas Jenkins  
Mr. Robert Weagley  
Dr. Ken Neill  
Mr. Jeff Deem  
Mr. William Laine, Jr.  
Mr. Chris Vaughan  
Hon. Russell Garrison  
Mr. Wynston Holbrook  
Mr. Tom Powers  
Mr. Samuel Swift

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Pete Nixon  
Mr. Walter Rogers  
Hon. Gordon Birkett

VMRC STAFF

Mr. Jack Travelstead  
Mr. Rob O'Reilly  
Mr. Roy Insley  
Ms. Stephanie Iverson  
Mr. Joe Cimino  
Mr. Lewis Jones

**I. Introductions, Announcements**

Chairman Garrison called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

**II. Approval of the minutes from the October 19, 2004 meeting**

The minutes were approved.

**III. Old Business**

There was no old business.

Mr. Weagley asked if the possibility of a shad bycatch had been brought to the ASMFC.

Mr. Travelstead explained that the issue had yet to be brought to the ASMFC. He stated that staff did not support doing so, and that staff would address the Commission with all the reasons why they did not support it. He explained this may lead to a public hearing, and that if the Commission wished to further pursue the issue it would not be until August or November that it would be brought before the ASMFC.

Mr. Powers pointed out the sheepshead recreational fishery was expanding and that it may be appropriate, as he had mentioned at the last meeting, to look into setting a minimum size and bag limit.

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **a. Review of Summer Flounder Recreational Fishing Options for 2005**

Mr. O'Reilly informed the committee that on January 4 an Ad Hoc meeting met to discuss the recreational flounder fishery. He stated the meeting was well attended and had representatives from several anglers' groups. The Ad Hoc group, as a result of the meeting, came up with four options for the 2005 summer flounder recreational fishery. Mr. O'Reilly then illustrated the options, as well as the situation from the previous year. He also mentioned that most of the individuals that had responded to date (the public comment period not being closed) favored option 1.

Chairman Garrison asserted that the bulk of the calls and letters he received were for option 1.

Several members agreed that, due to the fact these options would not be voted on by the Commission until the end of February, it was unnecessary to choose an option that had a closed season through March.

Mr. Vaughan had a question on how option 1 was more conservative.

Mr. O'Reilly explained that using the data, option 1 is slightly more conservative than option 2 due to the way the data has to be analyzed. The data set has to include the years from 1994 to 1998 (which had landings for March); also the cumulative distribution of the landings is fit by a non-linear curve that gives more landings to March than occurred.

Mr. Powers held concern over dropping the bag limit below six fish. He stated that the six fish bag limit was conservative and that anything below this may not meet the expectation of anglers, who go out hoping to catch their limit.

Mr. Place reported to the committee that Mr. Jenkins supported either option 3 or option 4 because up river anglers do not encounter many fish over 16 inches.

Mr. O'Reilly noted that the Potomac River tributaries could be regulated under the same regulations as the Potomac River main stem.

Mr. Deem said he believed the Potomac River Commission would go with a smaller size fish. This would give those in the area some relief; he therefore favored option 2 for the rest of the state.

Mr. Swift mentioned that eastern shore anglers would, over the last several years, often catch some of their biggest fish by March 28. Therefore, they do not wish to have a closed season. He also explained that they did not want an eight fish bag limit, because that would increase the chance of going over quota later in the year.

Chairman Garrison asked if the committee was ready to vote.

**The committee voted as follows: 3 members supported option 1; 1 member supported option 4; and 5 members supported option 2**

#### **b. Gill Net Marking Requirements**

Chairman Garrison introduced this issue. He stated that he spoke with several fishermen about marking gill nets with another buoy. Chairman Garrison said he would like to discuss this tonight and that committee members should go back and get input from gill netters, so they could come back and vote on the issue at the next meeting.

Mr. Travelstead handed out a summary with the current rules. He informed the committee that he had more complaints this year from commercial gill-netters, as opposed to recreational anglers, about lures being caught in the net. The commercial fishermen are interested in solving the problem.

Chairman Garrison had a question for Officer Jones regarding flags.

Officer Jones explained his concern is requiring an additional marker statewide. He noted that a gill-netter had the option of adding as many markers or buoys as they wished.

Mr. Bowden remarked that an extra ball might affect the way the net fished. He then made note that until the requirements regarding the Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction issue was complete, the gill net marking should not be decided. He then stated that this was a good idea that should be returned to at a later date.

Mr. Swift explained that when setting a net, it was easiest to set with just one weight. Also, that stopping the net reel to add another marker and or weight would affect the way the net fished and that it could potentially be a hazard.

Chairman Garrison held that this item was brought up for discussion only at this point. He asked Mr. Travelstead to include it on the agenda for the next meeting.

### **c. Discussion of the 2004 Chesapeake Area Recreational Striped Bass Harvest Amount**

Mr. O'Reilly updated the committee that NMFS replied to a VMRC request to look into the recreation harvest estimates for 2003. Mr. O'Reilly then detailed the NMFS response.

Mr. Powers expressed concern as to the on site survey procedure, due to a loss of access points after the hurricane.

Mr. Travelstead and Mr. O'Reilly assured the committee that this was taken into account by the MRFS survey. Mr. Travelstead also mentioned that up and down the East Coast there is skepticism about the MRFS survey, and that there is a study ongoing to validate the survey procedure.

Mr. O'Reilly then discussed the 2004 preliminary landing results. According to the preliminary results it was observed that the recreational landings were far over the quota. Mr. O'Reilly explained that the final results could not be expected to be much less than the preliminary. He also explained that the committee should be thinking about changes to address the recreational landings overage. The commercial fishery already has changes in place and does not need to be looked at, at this time.

Mr. Powers asked if the lengths of the fish that were measured at Lynnhaven and Little Creek could be looked at in order to see if there are fish caught in the ocean being attributed to the Bay Quota.

Mr. O'Reilly stated it would be looked into, after a raw data request.

Mr. Place supported Mr. Power's suggestion.

Mr. Deem asked if there is any concern that the striped bass are being managed to a level that is allowing the population to grow very high.

Mr. O'Reilly expressed that there are questions as to the validity of the Virtual Population Analysis.

Mr. Place and Mr. Bowden mentioned that the striped bass over abundance came up at the ASMFC weakfish meeting.

**V. Next Meeting**

The next meeting was not set.

**VI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20pm.