

VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

FINFISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

VMRC CONFERENCE ROOM

October 18, 2005

MEMBERS PRESENT

Hon. Russell Garrison
Hon. Ernie Bowden
Mr. Jeff Deem
Mr. Russell Gaskins
Mr. Douglas F. Jenkins, Sr
Hon. William Laine, Jr.
Mr. David Agee proxy for Dr. Ken Neill
Mr. Samuel Swift
Mr. Chris Vaughan
Mr. Robert Weagley

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Walter Rogers
Mr. Tom Powers
Mr. Wynston Holbrook
Mr. Peter Nixon

VMRC STAFF

Mr. Jack Travelstead
Mr. Eric Robillard
Ms. Sonya Davis
Mr. Joe Cimino

I. Introductions, Announcements

Chairman Garrison called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm. Chairman Garrison announced that Mr. Holbrook would be unable to attend.

II. Approval of the minutes from the September 20, 2005 meeting

Mr. Travelstead announced that there was an amended version of the minutes that he would be handing out. The minutes were approved as amended.

III. Old Business

Striped Bass; Final Recommendations

Mr. Travelstead stated there were no new handouts to provide to FMAC. Mr. Travelstead explained that the Commission has advertised all of the FMAC-reviewed striped bass issues for public comment. He first addressed the one-year ban of temporary transfers. He spoke of several factors that, if they were to occur as a result of the ban, would prevent the desired results. Mr. Travelstead stated that staff still supported a two-tag system, clarifying that it should result in some reductions to average weight. He expressed the possibility of reassessing and modifying the system after the first year. Also, he stressed that there is a negative effect due to bycatch mortality with this system.

Mr. Weagley asked if, with the two-tag system, it was possible to go with a 30-inch fish instead of a 28-inch fish, citing the New York market.

Mr. Travelstead said that staff was not set on a specific number.

Mr. Bowden explained that the Ad Hoc Committee had proposed 28 inches because that is the size the reduction is aimed at.

Mr. Travelstead stated that staff also continues to support mesh size restrictions.

Mr. Weagley mentioned the data from VIMS showed an increase in young of the year. He stated that if there is not an increase in quota that these fish would not be able to be harvested for a long time.

Mr. Travelstead said he believed there would be some increase to the quota.

Mr. Bowden stated there might be a law enforcement issue, if hook and line striped bass are caught and kept on boats that are fishing gill nets under the 7-inch mesh restriction.

Mr. Kelly Place spoke from the audience and stated that the bycatch issue is a serious one and something that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is focused on. He stated that commercial discards will have to come off future quotas, and that Virginia would suffer in poundage and public relations.

There were some questions as to how discard estimates are arrived at.

Mr. Deem asked if a 7-inch mesh size was previously voted on and endorsed by FMAC.

Mr. Rick Robins addressed the Committee and asked if they were in favor of the one-year ban on temporary transfers.

After some discussion Chairman Garrison asked for a vote.

The FMAC was split 5-5 on the endorsement of the elimination of temporary transfers. Chairman Garrison asked Mr. Travelstead to inform the Commission that this was so.

IV. New Business

Mr. Travelstead stated that Commissioner Pruitt had received a letter from Dr. Bill Hogarth of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding divergent management measures between state and federal agencies on shark species. Such letters were sent to other states as well. This letter specifically addressed Virginia's commercial bycatch of up to 200 pounds of shark carcasses less than 31 inches, as well as the 7,500 pound daily limit overall. Also, there is no recreational minimum size limit in Virginia. Mr. Travelstead informed FMAC that ASMFC was in the early stages of developing a shark fisheries management plan. He explained to the Committee that no decision on this issue needed to be made at this meeting.

Chairman Garrison stated he would like to initiate discussions on regulations regarding speckled trout, croaker and spot. He then introduced Mr. Hank Norton.

Mr. Norton addressed the Committee on his concern that Virginia needs to take action on regulating the speckled trout fishery. He stated that several other states already have minimum size and possession limits in place.

Chairman Garrison then asked Committee members to think about minimum size and possession limits for spot and croaker as well as speckled trout. It was requested that measures concerning all three species be added to next month's agenda.

Mr. Deem returned to the issue of gill net mesh size recommendations for the striped bass fishery. He felt that FMAC should make some endorsement to be taken to the Commission. He then made the motion to phase in a 7-inch maximum mesh size for all gill nets used in the striped bass Chesapeake Area fishery. The phase in would require an 8-inch maximum for the 2006 season and a 7-inch maximum for the 2007 season.

The motion was approved.

V. Next Meeting

The next meeting was set for Tuesday, November 15 at 6pm.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37pm.