

VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

FINFISH MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 15, 2005 - 7:00 PM

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Hon. Russell Garrison
Hon. Ernest Bowden Jr.
William Laine Jr.
Jeff Deem
Chris Vaughan
David Agee (for Dr. Ken Neill)
Robert Weagley
Wyn Holbrook
Tom Powers
Douglas Jenkins Sr.
Russell W. Gaskins
Samuel Swift
Walter Rogers

MEMBERS ABSENT

Pete Nixon

VMRC STAFF

Jack Travelstead
Rob O'Reilly
Eric Robillard
Ellen Cosby
Sonya Davis
Ben Major
Claude Bain

I. Introductions; Announcements

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Russell Garrison.

II. Approval of minutes

The minutes from the October 18, 2005 meeting were approved as written.

III. Old Business

A. Continued discussion on Sharks

Rob O'Reilly distributed a hand-out on Virginia shark harvests and the new federal list, grouped by category. Concern was expressed regarding the tolerance on seaside for lengths. Mr. O'Reilly explained that the Public Notice advertised recreational size limits and commercial catch limitations. There were no changes on spiny dogfish.

Ernie Bowden commented that it is wide open on who can land, but we are very restricted on what we can land.

Tom Powers asked about longlining. He asked how we should educate the public on the kinds of sharks. He suggested that we put some sharks in the new Anglers Guide. Mr. O'Reilly stated that we are going to wait before developing a limited entry program.

Jeff Deem introduced David Hickman, the new CCA director.

B. Additional discussion on Sheepshead Management Measures

Jack Travelstead provided copies of a handout on Sheepshead to members. Other State limits were reviewed. He reported that the Recreational Fishing Advisory Board met last night, and tabled the sheepshead study from ODU. The reasons given were it cost a lot of money and it is not a Baywide species, only occurring near the CBBT. They asked about the purpose of the study (new regulations?) and also what was the FMAC's position

David Agee noted that the fishing groups wanted an interim bag limit while the study was going on at ODU.

Mr. Powers stated that he had recommended a four-fish limit, the same as for spadefish. He said he was worried about too large of a bag limit (like NC has) and overfishing, which causes the big fish to disappear. There were 404 citations in 2005. He also suggested a 15,000 pound cap on commercial harvest.

Doug Jenkins said he was concerned about sheepshead eating oysters, and that we need to catch more of them.

Mr. Deem remarked that we need a slot limit, because we have a lot of big sheepshead now.

Mr. Bowden suggested a hook & line bag limit, then there would be no need for a quota.

Mr. Powers responded that the majority of commercial fish were caught by pound nets.

In the audience, Jim Hayden noted that Florida catches a million one and a half pound sheepshead. He said he was in contact with fishing clubs. Kelly Place advised the committee that ODU's study ought to be funded. He said he read about the occurrence of a large cyclical pattern of sheepshead abundance in a book about the Bay; we don't see arbitrary numbers. He encouraged caution in developing new regulations.

Mr. Powers made a motion to support the funding of Dr. Jones' Sheepshead study at ODU. The motion was seconded and passed.

Mr. Powers made a second motion to limit recreational fishermen and commercial hook & line fishermen to four sheepshead. The motion was seconded, then members discussed this motion.

Bobby Weagley said that he couldn't see regulating without data to support it.

Wyn Holbrook said he was reluctant to support an arbitrary number; we need a study.

Mr. Powers stated that other states have smaller fish; our average is 7-12 pound fish.

Mr. Garrison noted that we don't have sufficient data.

Mr. Place commented that the commercial hook & line is limited entry. There has been no increase in harvest, so it should be managed on a quota with a cap.

Mr. Jenkins said we are being too hasty; other states have bigger limits.

Mr. Hayden remarked that when people learn how to catch them, then individuals could take 40-60 per day of large sheepshead. He supports a bag limit and noted that this is a developing fishery..

Mr. Bowden suggested setting a target (in pounds) and a 20-fish bag limit per license for commercial hook & line.

Mr. Powers offered an amended motion for a 4-fish recreational bag limit and a 20-fish commercial hook & line limit. The vote was 3:7 and the motion failed.

Mr. Garrison said to wait until next spring.

Chris Vaughan noted that the recreational catch is going up, not the commercial, so we need to address the recreational fishery.

Mr. Vaughan made a motion for a 4-fish recreational limit and one fish greater than or equal to 23 inches. The motion was seconded and passed with a vote of 9:1.

Claude Bain remarked that a 24-inch sheepshead was about a 0.9-pound fish.

IV. New Business

A. Discussion on Spot, Croaker and Speckled Trout Management Measures

Mr. Garrison said he had put this item on the agenda. Hand-outs were provided to members for the three species. He said we need the same bag limit for gray trout and speckled trout.

Mr. Weagley said we're not catching the quota, so why reduce it?

Mr. Bowden reported that the ASMFC had held public hearings. The results indicated people were opposed to change, and wanted more scientific data collected.

Mr. Travelstead stated that a peer review of the stock assessment had been conducted. There was a question about an increase in natural mortality. He was reluctant to further regulate fishing.