

FINAL MINUTES

Recreational Fishing Advisory Board Meeting

September 10, 2007

Members Present

Edward Rhodes - Vice-chairman
Carlisle Bannister
John Barr

Jim Deibler
Jesse "Jimmie" Duell
Charles Randolph

Members Not Present

George Hudgins - Chairman
Carolyn Brown

Charles Southall

At 7:06 p.m., Vice-chairman Rhodes called the meeting to order.

Mr. Bill Bowen informed everyone that the revenue available for projects is estimated as \$1.2 million, as of September 30, 2007. Another projection will be provided for the November meetings.

Mr. Rhodes asked for a review of the draft July 9, 2007 RFAB meeting minutes. Mr. Randolph made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Bannister seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to accept the draft minutes as final.

Multi-Year Projects for Renewal.

- A) 2008 Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 11). Rob Cowling, Newport News Rotary Club and Coastal Conservation Association-Peninsula. **\$6,000**. Mr. Cowling let the Board know he was available for questions. No public comment was provided at the meeting.
- B) 2008 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 7). Wesley Brown, Capital District Kiwanis Club. **\$6,000**. Mr. Brown let the Board know he was available for questions. No public comment was provided at the meeting.
- C) 2008 Virginia Game Fish Tagging (Year 14). Jon Lucy, VIMS and Lewis Gillingham, VMRC. **\$73,093**. Both Mr. Lucy and Mr. Gillingham were available for questions. No public comment was provided at the meeting. Ms. Sonya Davis introduced Mr. Lewis Gillingham as the new director of the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament.
- D) Federal Assistance (Wallop-Breaux) Matching Funds FY 2008. Jack Travelstead, VMRC. **\$283,512**.

Mr. Larry Snider (CCA of VA): In previous years, the CCA has supported the use of recreational funds to provide some of the state matching funds. This year, the CCA will not support the use of the recreational funds for state match. The reason they do not support the amount requested is that they feel the commercial fund should provide all or at least more of the state match. This year, the recreational fund is being asked to provide

a higher percentage of the match funding than last year. The CCA suggests that other funding sources be investigated, if the commercial fund cannot provide the necessary amount.

Mr. Travelstead explained what projects the commercial fund was funding and why only \$75,000 was available for state matching funds for this year. The 2007 commercial fund had only about \$286,000 available for project funding.

- E) Sheepshead Population Dynamics in Chesapeake Bay, Virginia (Year 3). H. Liao, J. Ballenger, C. Jones, ODURF. **\$67,206**. Mr. Joey Ballenger let the Board know he was available for questions. The collection of samples for this year is behind the numbers of fish collected for last year. Last year, 178 fish were collected, and to date only 75 fish have been collected. The anglers are indicating that the sheepshead catches are down this year from previous years. The funding request before the RFAB is for the third and final year of the study (2008-2009).

Mr. Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA supports the continuation of this project for a third year with the hope that enough information will be collected for proper management of the species.

- F) Wishart's Point Landing. Stewart Hall, County of Accomack. **\$275,000**. (RF# 03-05: \$25,000 Engineering Study) Mr. Hall addressed the concerns contained in the written public comment with regard to water depth. The depth at high tide is 2 ½ to 3 feet and about 1 foot at low tide. The depth is also a concern for the Wishart's Point Committee and Accomack County. However, they feel that enough small boat and shore anglers will benefit from the improvements to warrant the cost. Also, there is no additional information, as to when or if the Army Corps of Engineers will be dredging the area.

Mr. Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA would support the improvement funding, if deep water access was provided and the area could accommodate a broader spectrum of boaters. The CCA does not support the funding of the project as currently proposed.

Ms. Sonya Davis read a letter provided to her at the start of the meeting. The Eastern Shore of Virginia Anglers Club supports the Wishart's Point project.

New Projects.

- G) 2008 Youth Developmental "Hooked on Fishing" Adventure (Year 1). A. Fisher, R. Lockhart, Virginia Charter Boat Association. **\$6,780**.

Mr. Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA supports partial funding of this project because the small number of scouts that will be able to participate. The cost per child is much higher for this project versus other educational projects. The CCA suggests the use of larger boats, such as headboats, to increase the number of participants, or reduce the amount of funding provided to make it more equitable with other similar projects.

H) Saxis Fishing Pier Expansion. Charles Tull, Mayor, Town of Saxis. **\$173,151**. Mayor Tull answered questions that were raised at the last meeting. The Town and pier are self-insured through the Virginia Municipal League. Since the last meeting, the Saxis area has been declared a critical harbor of refuge by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. This means that the dredging of the channel is on the high priority list, and the completion of the jetty, on the opposite side of the channel, will be added to the federal budget. Mayor Tull handed out copies of the Town ordinances set for the fishing pier in November of 2000. The ordinances are enforced by the Sheriff's Department, the Mayor, and the VMRC Marine Police. The pier is used by visitors from other states, a number of handicapped and nursing home individuals, as well as the events for children. Annually, the Town spends approximately \$2,800 on such items as Spivey restroom cleaning services, trash collection from a dumpster next to the pier, and year-round lighting. There is no fee to use the fishing pier, however anglers do need to purchase their own saltwater fishing license. Recently, a Licensing Agent was added in the nearby Town of Sanford. Many of the current anglers using the pier indicate that they purchase their fishing licenses on-line instead of going to an Agent. The extension of the pier would give access to deeper water (8 ft.) and better fishing opportunities for the pier anglers. The engineering firm of George, Miles, and Buhr did the cost estimate for the expansion of the fishing pier, and the Town feels that this is an accurate estimate. The expansion design is ADA compliant and will include lighting for night fishing. The erosion issue, brought up by the Virginia Pilot newspaper earlier in the year, is not occurring in the area of the fishing pier, but on the opposite side of the point.

Mr. Darrell Parker (Virginia Coastal Access Now, VCAN): VCAN enthusiastically supports this project.

I) Pilot Study: Application of pop-up satellite archival tags (PSATs) to assess postrelease survival, habitat utilization and short term movement of striped bass in Virginia's winter recreational fishery. J. Graves, R. Latour, A. Horodysky, VIMS. **\$71,371**. Dr. Graves restated that this is only a pilot study (10 fish), and they are not only looking at survivability, but where the fish travel in the water column, and whether this new, smaller sized tag will be useful for studying large striped bass or other similar sized species.

Mr. Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA does not support the funding of this project because most anglers already believe that live-baiting circle hooks for striped bass is better than J hooks, as far as mortality is concerned. The CCA would like VMRC and the Anglers Guide to educate and encourage anglers to use circle hooks, when live-baiting for striped bass. The other issue with this project is the near-term benefits versus the cost of working with only 10 fish.

J) Improving stock assessment of weakfish (*Cynoscion regalis*). Dr. Yan Jiao, Dr. Don Orth, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University and Rob O'Reilly, VMRC. **\$87,194**. Dr. Jiao introduced Dr. Orth to the Board and let them know they were available for questions. Mr. O'Reilly informed the Board that they had looked for other sources of funding, and also promotion of this project. Since the last meeting, they have spoken to Mr. Derek Orner of the NOAA, Chesapeake Bay Office and received a favorable response, so far. Project proposals are submitted to NOAA in December and the funding decisions are normally made in early March. Mr. O'Reilly said that the

second step taken was to contact the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). Mr. Bob Beal, the ASMFC, Director of the Interstate Fishery Management Program, indicated he would hand-out copies of this proposal to the ASMFC Assessment Review Committee, which will meet on September 17, and the Committee members will be asked to provide comment on the proposal at a later date. Mr. Beal also indicated that there will be opportunities for Dr. Jiao to meet with the Stock Assessment Committee for Weakfish, if the proposal is funded. Mr. Beal informed Mr. O'Reilly that they would review the ASMFC budget in the early spring of 2008, and see if there is a possibility of funding some of this project. Mr. O'Reilly will keep the RFAB informed, if other funding becomes available in the spring of 2008. Dr. Orth said that normally a request for stock assessment funding would not come to this type of Board. However, with the stock assessment at a stalemate, someone needed to step forward and take a leadership position. Virginia and especially Virginia recreational interests have a lot to gain by breaking the stalemate and seeing some change in the stock assessment of weakfish.

Mr. Larry Snider (CCA of VA): Mr. Snider said the Mr. O'Reilly addressed most of the CCA concerns on funding. The CCA wants other interests to come forward to help fund this project. The recreational anglers of Virginia should not be expected to pay for something that will benefit everyone.

- K) Reef Monitoring Equipment Support for VMRC's Fisheries Management Division. M. Meier, J. Grist, VMRC. ~~\$42,964~~ **Amended to \$72,964**. Mr. Joe Grist explained that as they did more research on the video equipment, they found video units that also provide imaging sonar. For sites in the turbid waters of the western Chesapeake Bay, the imaging sonar will help to get the unit where they want it quickly and more accurately. Mr. Grist hopes this will increase the number of reef sites they can survey during the year. The purchase of equipment will still need to go through the normal state procurement process, request for proposal (RFP). The primary plan is to use this equipment to monitor the artificial reef sites year after year, however if other agencies that work with VMRC have a project that would benefit from this type of equipment, they may be able to work out some type of loan program. This is an expensive piece of equipment and they would be very protective of it and very selective of the users. The artificial reef site monitoring would have priority over any other uses. The video/sonar imaging units, currently being considered, are light weight units that may easily be transported on either of the boats belonging to the Artificial Reef Program or the Plans and Statistics Department. Mr. Grist has spoken with manufacturers and some purchasers of the equipment to see what types of things have been done with these units and ease of use. Of the purchasers contacted so far, all were very pleased with the units. During the procurement process, there are opportunities to have the various units and features demonstrated. The funding request also included the cost of staff training sessions on the purchased unit. Maintenance and warranties have also been factored into the funding request. Mr. Grist said that the purchasers he spoke with have not had a lot of problems with the units, as long as the units were used and maintained properly. It was recommended that an additional year of warranty and training be asked for in the RFP at no additional cost. Mr. Grist was also asked to find out how expandable or upgradable the units are and whether these units only record video or do both video and stills. It was also recommended that refresher training on a continual basis be asked for in the RFP, for the unit purchased. Mr. Grist and Mr. Meier were asked to utilize Mr. Randolph's expertise

with audio-visual equipment, while going through the research and evaluation of these units, and Mr. Randolph agreed to provide assistance.

Mr. Larry Snider (CCA of VA): The CCA supports the annual monitoring of all the artificial reef sites. They encourage complete utilization of the equipment, on an annual basis, and more reporting of information to the anglers.

Mr. Grist cannot guarantee they would be able to survey all 22 reef sites in the first year, but they would video as many as possible. It is also the intent to not only provide written reports, but also to make the video available to the public via the Agency website.

- L) Adult Red Drum Population Structure Study. Joe Grist, VMRC. **\$20,390**. Mr. Grist gave a brief overview of the study and reiterated that this was only a one year study. No public comment was provided at the meeting.

The next Second Cycle RFAB meetings are scheduled for November 5 at 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Vice-chairman Rhodes adjourned the meeting at 8:16 p.m.

Note: Audio files of the meeting are available at <http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/vsrfd/index.shtm> (Choose, Current Proposals, on the left-hand menu)