

## FISHERIES MANAGEMENT DIVISION EVALUATION, 12/5/23

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Recommendations on funding requests from the Recreational and Commercial Fisheries License Funds.

**BACKGROUND  
AND ISSUES:**

The Recreational and Commercial license funds (Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development (VSRFDF) and Marine Fishing Improvement Fund (MFIF), respectively), are comprised of sales from the purchase of Virginia saltwater fishing licenses. Advisory boards for each of these funds advise the Commission on expenditures from those funds.

On September 11, 2023, the Recreational Fishing Advisory Board (RFAB) met virtually to review and recommend projects for the 2023 funding cycle from the VSRFDF. This cycle included requests for continued funding of 10 fishing event and research projects, and two requests for new projects. The RFAB recommended funding 11 of the 12 projects. Two of the reoccurring projects requested split funding between the recreational and commercial license funds.

The Commercial Fishing Advisory Board (CFAB) met virtually on November 6, 2023, to review three applications for ongoing research and a new project for economic support for the spiny dogfish industry. The CFAB recommended funding all four proposed programs from the MFIF.

**Applications to the VSRFDF (Recreational License Fund)**  
**\*items H and I are proposed as joint funded with the MFIF**

- A. 0423-01 2024 Hope House & Oak Grove Nursing Home Fishing Excursions and Clinics. Butch Pierce; George Reich, Great Bridge Fisherman's Association. **\$2,450.**  
The RFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.
- B. 0423-02 2024 Virginia Beach Anglers Club/Seton Youth Shelter Children's Fishing Trip. Lou Corigliano, Virginia Beach Anglers Club. **\$2,500.**  
The RFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.
- C. 0422-03 2024 Norfolk Youth Head Boat Fishing Trip. James "Ike" Eisenhower, Norfolk Anglers Club. **\$1,700.**  
The RFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.
- D. 0423-04 2024 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic and Kiwanis Fishing Clinic. Wesley Brown, Capital District Kiwanis Club. **\$11,000.**

The RFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.

- E. 0422-05 2024 Saxis and Morley's Wharf Children's Fishing and Conservation Educational Outings. Steven Elliot, Eastern Shore of Virginia Anglers Club. **\$2,420.**

The RFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.

- F. 0423-06 2024 Knights of Columbus Annual Kids Fishing Day. Jim McCaddin, Knights of Columbus. **\$7,500.**

The RFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.

- G. 0423-07 Virginia Game Fish Tagging 2024. S. Musick (VIMS), L. Gillingham (VMRC). **\$90,908.**

The RFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.

- H. 0423-08 \*Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-Year American Eel in the Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay. M. Fabrizio, T. Tuckey, VIMS. \$31,558. **(\$15,779 from VSRFDF, and \$15,779 from MFIF).**

The RFAB and CFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.

- I. 0423-09 \*Federal Assistance (Sportfish Restoration) Matching Funds, Federal FY 2024. P. Geer. \$148,809 **(119,047 from VSRFDF, 29,762 from MFIF).**

The RFAB and CFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.

- J. 0423-10 Virginia Marine Sportfish Collection Project, Year 17. Ethan Simpson, Virginia Marine Resources Commission. **\$18,000.**

The RFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.

- K. 0423-11 Artificial Reef Program Anglers Support. M. Avery, Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association. **\$78,420.**

**The RFAB voted unanimously against funding this project.**

- L. 0423-12 Mathews Land Conservancy Public Access Fishing Enhancement and Program Development. B. La Casse, Mathews Land Conservancy. **\$17,850.**

The RFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.

#### **Applications to the Marine Fishing Improvement Fund**

- M. Biological Monitoring of River Herring in Virginia; additional project funds. Eric Hilton. VIMS, **32,000.**

The CFAB voted unanimously to recommend funding the project.

N. Spiny Dogfish Industry Economic Support. Rachael Peabody, VMRC, 150,000.

In spring 2023, the primary buyer of spiny dogfish in Virginia shut down, leaving the majority of the fleet that lands in the Rudee Inlet area of Virginia Beach with no buyer for the upcoming season. The industry reached out to the VMRC requesting assistance for the 2023/2024 season. Staff presented an option of utilizing MFIF funds to support proposals from individuals to purchase spiny dogfish and ship them to the only remaining processing plant on the East Coast in Massachusetts. If approved by the Commission, the VMRC would initiate a Request for Proposals (RFP) in early December, with hopes of awarding a contract in time to assist the industry for the remaining 23/24 season (May 1, 2023 through April 30, 2024). **The CFAB voted unanimously in support of the RFP approach.**

Up to \$150,000 commercial license funds is proposed to support proposals. If the Commission approves this approach, staff will move forward with an RFP process immediately with the goal of awarding proposed funding in early 2024.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The RFAB recommended funding projects A through J and project L from the Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund (VSRFDF), totaling \$289,154. The CFAB recommended funding projects H, I and M and funding the RFP process item N, totaling \$227,541 from the Marine Fishing Improvement Fund (MFIF).