

A request for renewal of funding of the Virginia Marine Sportfish Collection Project (Year 3).

Need:

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission's Biological Sampling Program (also known as the Stock Assessment Program) has been collecting length, weight, sex, and age information from thirteen species since 1998. Fish are processed either by VMRC staff or the Age and Growth lab at Old Dominion University, Center for Quantitative Fishery Ecology.

The majority of samples collected come from the commercial fishing industry, with very few samples from the recreational fishing community. However, not all of the thirteen species are readily available for sampling from commercial harvesters. Recreational fisherman could provide needed biological data to fill any sampling deficiencies. Species of importance to the recreational community include cobia, red drum, black drum, sheepshead, Spanish mackerel and tautog; however, VMRC sampling goals for the majority of these species often fall short due to the lesser role they play in the commercial fishing industry.

Objective:

To increase the number of length, sex, and age samples collected for the following species. This list is dynamic and can change as sampling needs are identified, or sampling goals met, during the year.

Current Listing (as of April 15, 2009)

Cobia
Sheepshead
Spanish Mackerel
King Mackerel
Bluefish (greater than 16 pounds or 36 inches)
Red drum
Black Drum
Tautog

Estimated Benefits:

Marine fish populations are exploited by commercial and recreational fisherman and are subject to significant pressure through habitat degradation. Fisheries scientists conduct stock assessments to determine the health of a fishery and establish recommendations for future harvest levels. At the foundation of these stock assessments are accurate data on catch and effort and descriptive data on population demographics. Accurate and precise age, sex, and length composition data, in concert with age-specific vital rates such as fecundity and selectivity, allow fisheries scientists to choose from a suite of assessment

models to predict appropriate harvests. By continuing to fund this project, we will be able to increase the number of samples collected and will be better able to predict the trends of fish population in the future.

Approach:

In cooperation with local fishing facilities, chest freezers are provided to select locations. Each freezer is marked with an identifying sign and a list of target species. A supply of durable plastic bags, information cards and pens will be provided in each freezer. Cooperating fisherman are able to put a filleted frame of the fish, with head and tail intact in a plastic bag, along with the completed information card, and place the bag in the freezer. Bags are collected by VMRC staff and processed for biological information.



Additional samples are obtained directly from select regional fishing tournaments which VMRC staff provides technical support. These tournaments include, but are not limited too, the Black Drum World Championship Fishing Tournament in Cape Charles and the Hampton Creek Cobia Tournament in Hampton. Participating tournament anglers will receive promotional shirts or hats, as described below, for their donations.



An incentive program for anglers is included in the project. For fisherman participating in the program for the first time, each will earn a promotional shirt or hat. Participating anglers will be able to receive information about all of the project's donated fish, to

include information on length, sex and age of samples, from VMRC and Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund (VSRFDF) websites.

As of the 1st of January, 2009, a total of 511 angler donations had been received, since July 2007, producing 1,070 samples (336 fish donated in 2007; 734 for 2008). Data tables were generated by VMRC's Biological Sampling Program that detail the species, number, and minimum and maximum size of the donations to date, at each of the project donation sites in 2008 (see Appendix I). In addition, as data becomes available, it will be posted on the VMRC website at: http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec_assessment/index.shtm

Location History:

The project initially began on July 5, 2007, with collection freezers set-up in cooperations with three bait and tackle shops: Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton), Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach) and Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville). These three locations were ideal for the initial start-up of this project, as they were locations that had high angler traffic; and an onsite cleaning station and weight station. During 2008 Bell Isle Marina (Hampton), Wachapreague Marina, and Morningstar Marina (Gwynn's Island) were added as project donation sites. In addition, Chris' Bait and Tackle added a second donation freezer to their site during May 2008 to meet public participation demands. This past fall, 2008, Morningstar Marina ceased to be a project donation site, but staff is working to locate another Middle Peninsula or Northern Neck donation site for the project. The project initially proposed five locations within the first year, a goal that was met by May 2008, the end of the funding for the first year. However, due to the budget constraints during the past year, and the delay in determining future funding availabilities from the Virginia Recreational Fishing Development Fund, the project was downsized to insure sustainability through the summer of 2009. The downsizing included reducing the number of freezer collection locations to four (Wallace's Bait and Tackle, Long Bay Pointe Marina, Chris' Bait and Tackle, and the soon-to-open Buckroe Fishing Pier), and the removal of three species from the collection list (Tilefish, Grouper, and Spadefish).

Length of Time:

Collection from recreational fishery, with promotional incentives, will continue each year. The annual budget will be adjusted each year to represent projected funding needs.

Estimated Cost (Year 3):

Item	Total Cost
Replacement Freezers (None for year 3)	\$0.00
Project supplies (bags, information sheets, pencils, cleaning materials)	\$1,500.00
Promotional items (hats, shirts, signs)	\$4,000.00
Promotional item mailings (envelopes and postage)	\$2,000.00
Sample processing and transport equipment (replacement saws and blades, cold boxes, hand carts).	\$2,500.00
TOTAL	\$10,000.00

APPENDIX 1

Sportfish Project Collection Site=Bell Isle Marina

Sportfish Project Collection Site	Donated Species	Number of Samples Provided	Smallest Size Provided (Inch)	Largest Size Provided (Inch)
Bell Isle Marina	Blueline Tilefish	14	20	26
Bell Isle Marina	Snowy Grouper	2	43	44
Bell Isle Marina	Tautog	25	12	19

Sportfish Project Collection Site=Chris Bait and Tackle

Sportfish Project Collection Site	Donated Species	Number of Samples Provided	Smallest Size Provided (Inch)	Largest Size Provided (Inch)
Chris Bait and Tackle	Black Drum	158	29	50
Chris Bait and Tackle	Cobia	11	37	62
Chris Bait and Tackle	Red Drum	21	18	46
Chris Bait and Tackle	Spadefish	84	7	22
Chris Bait and Tackle	Tautog	77	12	20

Sportfish Project Collection Site=Eastern Shore Black Drum Tournament

Sportfish Project Collection Site	Donated Species	Number of Samples Provided	Smallest Size Provided (Inch)	Largest Size Provided (Inch)
Eastern Shore Black Drum Tournament	Black Drum	64	32	53

Sportfish Project Collection Site=Hampton Creek Cobia Tournament

Sportfish Project Collection Site	Donated Species	Number of Samples Provided	Smallest Size Provided (Inch)	Largest Size Provided (Inch)
Hampton Creek Cobia Tournament	Cobia	6	39	49

Sportfish Project Collection Site=Long Bay Pointe Marina

Sportfish Project Collection Site	Donated Species	Number of Samples Provided	Smallest Size Provided (Inch)	Largest Size Provided (Inch)
Long Bay Pointe Marina	Black Drum	4	22	38
Long Bay Pointe Marina	Bluefish	10	34	37
Long Bay Pointe Marina	Blueline Tilefish	43	10	26
Long Bay Pointe Marina	Cobia	1	43	43
Long Bay Pointe Marina	Red Drum	1	22	22
Long Bay Pointe Marina	Snowy Grouper	1	68	68
Long Bay Pointe Marina	Spadefish	108	8	23

Sportfish Project Collection Site=Morningstar Marina Gwynns Island

Sportfish Project Collection Site	Donated Species	Number of Samples Provided	Smallest Size Provided (Inch)	Largest Size Provided (Inch)
Morningstar Marina Gwynns Island	Spadefish	3	16	18

Sportfish Project Collection Site=Not designated

Sportfish Project Collection Site	Donated Species	Number of Samples Provided	Smallest Size Provided (Inch)	Largest Size Provided (Inch)
Not designated	Red Drum	1	25	25
Not designated	Spadefish	1	9	9
Not designated	Spanish Mackerel	1	17	17
Not designated	Tautog	2	22	23

Sportfish Project Collection Site=ODU CQFE

Sportfish Project Collection Site	Donated Species	Number of Samples Provided	Smallest Size Provided (Inch)	Largest Size Provided (Inch)
ODU CQFE	Cobia	1	44	44
ODU CQFE	Spadefish	5	10	12

Sportfish Project Collection Site=VMRC FMD

Sportfish Project Collection Site	Donated Species	Number of Samples Provided	Smallest Size Provided (Inch)	Largest Size Provided (Inch)
VMRC FMD	Blueline Tilefish	7	20	25
VMRC FMD	Snowy Grouper	3	36	44

Sportfish Project Collection Site=Wallaces Bait and Tackle

Sportfish Project Collection Site	Donated Species	Number of Samples Provided	Smallest Size Provided (Inch)	Largest Size Provided (Inch)
Wallaces Bait and Tackle	Cobia	27	36	61
Wallaces Bait and Tackle	Spadefish	39	8	16
Wallaces Bait and Tackle	Spanish Mackerel	3	14	17
Wallaces Bait and Tackle	Tautog	11	15	19