

VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

HARD CLAM MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

VMRC CONFERENCE ROOM

March 16, 2005

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chip Petre
Hon. Ernest Bowden

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. David Callis
Mr. George Demarco
Mr. John S. Forrest
Mr. William B. Hall, Jr.
Mr. Joshua Merrit, Jr.
Mr. Richard B. Zasimowich

VMRC

Joe Cimino
Roy Insley
Kenny Oliver

OTHERS PRESENT

Raymond Crowder
Lane Jenkins
William Crewe
John Register
William Davis
James Close
Edward Ewell
William Hicks

I. Introductions, Announcements

The meeting was called to order at 6:13 P.M. by Chairman, Hon. Ernest Bowden. There was not a quorum.

II. Old Business

No meeting minutes or old business were reviewed.

III. New Business

- a. **Early opening of the Clam Relay Season in the Hampton Roads Shellfish Relay Area.**

Roy Insley informed the committee that the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) contacted VMRC in early February to notify staff that the Newport News channel was scheduled to be dredged in Mid-March for maintenance purposes. After a request from Mr. Insley to postpone the dredging until VMRC could open a portion of the area scheduled to be dredged to clammers, the COE agreed to wait until May 1st. Staff was then notified on March 11th, Mr. Insley, continued, that due to budget constraints COE was suspending dredging in the area indefinitely. Therefore, VMRC was no longer considering opening the Relay season early.

b. Discussion of opening the Hampton Roads Shellfish Relay Area as clean bottom grounds.

Mr. Insley stated that he, and others had been in contact with officials at the Department of Shellfish Sanitation (DSS). According to those officials the area delineated as the Hampton Roads Shellfish Relay Area is at a level that depuration is not needed in most of the quarter delineated by section 7a of the Hampton Roads condemnation area.

All present were shown a map of the area listed as 7a for the DSS Hampton Roads Shellfish Area Condemnation. All present agreed that this was acceptable if it could be opened as clean bottom.

Mr. Ewell asked if the tolerance for minimum size could be increased from the current 2% to what is used in other areas.

Mr. Ewell also stated that it would be easier for clammers if the season ended at the end of the month instead of on the 15th.

All in attendance agreed that it would be favorable to have the season extended to the end of the month.

Mr. Insley pointed out that the season had been extended the past 3 years to accommodate industry to that end.

Mr. Bowden said that he would bring before the Commission the following request: for Shellfish Area Condemnation number 7a to be opened as clean bottom, that the season for this area be opened until the end of August, and that the tolerance for minimum size to be set at 10% by number in each bag or container.

Mr. Hicks asked if the CMAC could have input into where mitigation clams were placed. He noted that one such deployment had recently taken place at Middle Ground light, and asked if in the future other spots could be used so the clammers could harvest the clams.

Mr. Cimino explained that the contract for that particular mitigation project stipulated that the clams be placed at Middle Ground Light Broodstock Sanctuary.

Mr. Petre pointed out that, in the past, CMAC has made suggestions on where clams could be deployed.

Officer Oliver expressed his concern, for conservation reasons, that mitigation clams should not be deployed in an area where they could be easily re-harvested.

Chairman Bowden put forth that the next agenda address a proactive plan for mitigation projects.

Mr. Cimino mentioned that although the COE was not required to inform VMRC before dredging, in the past VMRC had requested at least 30 days notice.

Mr. Insley acknowledged that the reason he had been contacted by COE originally was because a Corps employee had come across correspondence from him requesting notification of maintenance dredging.

Chairman Bowden advocated drafting a letter for the COE from CMAC again requesting that the Corps announce to VMRC, at least 30 days prior to acting, all projects to take place. He also suggested that a similar letter could be sent from the Commission itself.

IV. Next Meeting Date

Chairman Bowden asked for suggestions for new members of the CMAC. He then asked if the Committee would prefer to meet on a more regular basis.

Mr. Petre suggested the Committee meet quarterly.

The next meeting date was not scheduled.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 P.M.