

FINAL MINUTES

Recreational Fishing Advisory Board Meeting

January 8, 2007

Members Present

Edward Rhodes - Vice-chair
John Barr
Carolyn Brown

Jesse "Jimmie" Duell
Charles Randolph
Charles Southall

Members Not Present

George Hudgins - Chairman
Carlisle Bannister
Jim Deibler

At 7:00 p.m., Vice-chairman Rhodes called the meeting to order and asked if staff had any announcements

Ms. Jane McCroskey informed everyone that the revenue available for projects is estimated as \$1.2 million, as of December 31, 2006. A projection for July 2007 will be available at the next meeting.

Mr. Rhodes asked for a review of the draft November 13, 2006 RFAB meeting minutes. Mr. Randolph made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Brown seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to accept the draft minutes as final.

Multi-Year Projects for Renewal.

- A) 2007 Sunshine Children's Fishing Program. Denny Dobbins, Portsmouth Anglers Club. **\$7,194.** Mr. Dobbins explained that this project was essentially the same as in previous years. The only difference was that they were attempting to establish themselves with a 501-3C non-profit status, so that they may approach Wal-Mart as a possible additional funding source. The budget has an increase of \$240 over the 2006 program.
- B) 2007 Saxis & Morley's Wharf Fishing Pier Youth Fishing Tournaments (Year 6). Allen Evans, Eastern Shore of Virginia Anglers Club. **\$2,500.** Mr. Matt Abell, president of the ESAC, explained that this project was essentially the same as in previous years. Mr. Abell said they had a good turnout for the 2006 tournaments. The Morley's Wharf tournament was hindered slightly by weather, but the Saxis tournament was very well attended. Mr. Abell hinted that they could use more room on the Saxis fishing pier (see Agenda Item L). They combined the two tournaments into one proposal request this year, for easier expenditure tracking. The budget is the same as the 2006 tournaments.
- C) 2007 Early Summer Children's Fishing Program. Melvin Dudley, Northampton County Anglers Club. **\$1,100.** Mr. Dudley explained that this project was essentially the same as in previous years. The Club plans to continue with the June middle school boat trip.

In 2007, they will attempt to add a pier fishing day, for elementary and high school children, in July or August. The budget is the same as the 2006 program.

- D) Artificial Reef, Funding for Deployment of Structure 2006-2007. Mike Meier, VMRC. **\$150,000.** Mr. Meier said that this funding request is being made to ensure that funds will be available to deploy demolition concrete material from the Woodrow Wilson Bridge project (I-495). In the last RFAB review cycle, the program was allocated \$200,000 for material deployments. A $\frac{3}{4}$ mile span (30,000 tons) of Wilson Bridge material is expected to become available in 2007. He plans to deploy the bridge material on the Asphalt Pile and Northern Neck artificial reef sites. Estimated deployment costs for 15,000 tons of material are approximately \$350,000. Maryland was seeking funds to obtain the other half of the material. If Maryland cannot obtain all the funding necessary, Virginia may be able to receive additional material. This bridge does not have any known coatings that may cause environmental problems.
- E) Visual Function in Chesapeake Bay Sport and Prey Fishes: Summer Flounder, Bluefish, Cobia, and Atlantic Menhaden (Year 2). A. Horodysky, R. Brill, R. Latour, VIMS. **\$50,289.** Mr. Andrij Horodysky quickly reviewed Year 1 of this project. This study was originally presented as a two year study because of the difficulties in keeping these species in captivity and the added equipment challenges. The Year 2 request is slightly higher than Year 1, mainly in the salary, benefits, and travel budget sections.
- F) Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-Year American Eel, *Anguilla rostrata*, in the Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay (Year 7). Marcel Montane, VIMS. **\$36,325.** Mr. Montane hopes that the project will continue to be funded by both the recreational and commercial funds (50/50 split). Since 1999, the ASMFC has mandated that all coastal states conduct an annual Young-of-Year survey. Mr. Montane briefly reviewed the status of the current year study.
- G) Enhancing Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Habitat: Research and Education for Restoration (Year 13). Robert Orth, VIMS. **\$95,689.** Dr. Orth thanked the Board members for their support in previous years. The proposals for the last few years have been withdrawn during the review cycle because they have been successful in obtaining other funding sources for this research. If they are successful in finding other funding sources this year, the proposal will be withdrawn again this year. Dr. Orth gave a brief overview of the on-going seagrass restoration efforts. The grass beds in the lower seaside bays of the Eastern Shore have shown much improvement in the last few years, but the Chesapeake Bay beds are causing great concern.
- H) Estimating Relative Juvenile Abundance of Recreationally Important Finfish and Crustaceans in the Virginia Portion of Chesapeake Bay. M. Fabrizio, M. Montane, VIMS. **\$469,568.** Dr. Mary Fabrizio said that this study is also known as the VIMS trawl survey and it began 52 years ago. Dr. Fabrizio continued with a brief overview of the survey locations and the type of information collected. Twenty one species have juvenile indices developed from this survey. Quite a few of the species collected with this survey would be of interest to recreational anglers. They have submitted requests for

funding to other sources, but, as yet, have been unsuccessful in obtaining the necessary funding. The last few years' funding has come from the NOAA / Chesapeake Bay Office. Both Dr. Fabrizio and Mr. Montane said they would be happy to present information to angler's clubs, as well as continue to post information on the VIMS website. Chuck Macin of the Great Bridge Fisherman's Association was allowed to speak, and reminded the RFAB and the investigators from VIMS that many anglers still do not have computers, so website posting should not be the only outlet of information.

The RFAB asks that investigators, for all projects, make themselves available to the angler's clubs, since the anglers are the ones funding the research and monitoring. Also, written material should be presented to the public, so that a layman may understand and enjoy the benefits of the research and monitoring projects.

New Projects.

- I) Virginia Marine Sportfish Collection (Year 1). J. Grist, VMRC. **\$12,000**. Mr. Joe Grist, Plans & Statistics Department Head, gave a brief history of the VMRC, Stock Assessment Program (SAP). Since 1998, the Stock Assessment Technicians have worked with the commercial fishing industry to collect samples to obtain length, weight, sex, and age on a variety of important species. The staff works with the ODU, Age and Growth Lab that ages the fish collected. They cannot get all of the samples, for all of the species needed, from the commercial sector. Species such as cobia, red drum, blueline tilefish and snowy grouper are not readily available from the commercial catch. The plan is to set up chest freezers and identification signs at 5 recreational facilities. Information on the target species, carcass (with head and tail) donation instructions, and collection supplies (bags, cards, pens) would also be provided to anglers at the collection sites. In the future, staff intends to have the biological information posted on the VMRC/VSRFDF website, so anglers may find the information on fish that they contribute. The sampling would continue in future years. The budget would be adjusted each year and presented to the RFAB and Commission for approval. Mr. Grist explained that all fish would need to fall within the legal recreational size limits. The NOAA office in Beaufort, NC has agreed to age blueline tilefish and snowy grouper at no cost, if samples can be transported to the lab.

- J) SAS Licensing and Training for VMRC Technical Staff. Joe Grist, VMRC. **\$38,500**. Mr. Grist is seeking funds to provide 5 licensed copies of SAS (Statistical Analysis System) software and training, for Fisheries Management Division staff who work with data on a regular basis. Many other organizations, such as the ASMFC, VIMS, ODU, NOAA and NMFS, use SAS for data storage and analysis. Since this is proprietary software it is very difficult to convert data received from an organization using SAS to a Microsoft software format. Also, SAS provides many features not available with the Microsoft software or downloadable freeware. The Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS) is done in SAS and staff would like to be able to use the raw Virginia data to do their own analysis in a timely manner. If money becomes available in the Commercial Marine Improvement Fund, a proposal would also be submitted to the Commercial Fishing Advisory Board (CFAB).

- K) **Quinby Harbor Enhancements.** David Fluhart, Quinby Harbor Committee, Accomack County. **\$352,950.** Mr. Chris Frye, VHB, Inc. Environmental Consultant, gave a brief overview of the plans for Quinby Harbor. Quinby is located on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, at the southeast corner of Accomack County. Parramore and Wachapreague are the closest artificial reef sites, for boaters from this facility. Quinby Harbor has been in place for 50 years, and some repair and improvement was done in the mid-1980s. This funding proposal includes only the portions of the Quinby Harbor Master Plan that would be of benefit to the recreational anglers. Other grant sources are being sought after for funding the other items in the Plan. The highest priority is the boat ramp and the second is the fishing pier. The proposal includes the replacement of the 25' by 75' concrete ramp and the addition of floating docks on either side of the ramp. Also, the addition of gangways to the floating docks, with an L-head on the northern floating dock is planned. The proposal also includes some bulkhead replacement around the ramp. Accomack County recently acquired an additional parcel of land. This parcel is more convenient to the boat ramp, and they plan to use the area for the primary boat-trailer parking. Also, they plan to improve the traffic flow in the launch and recovery area. The overflow parking area will still be available for boat-trailer parking. The pervious pavers, for storm water management listed in the application, are something that the Master Plan includes, but the inclusion of the expense is negotiable. For the fishing pier, they plan to add a gangway ramp (4' X 40') and a floating dock (8' x 105') to extend from a fixed dock (8' x 90'). The fishing pier area would be an L-shaped (8' x 35' and 12' x 30') concrete floating dock. The request includes 50% funding for the fixed dock and gangway and 75% funding for the dedicated fishing pier. Mr. David Fluhart, Quinby Harbor Committee, explained that the facility is managed by a 9-member volunteer board that is appointed by the Accomack County Board of Supervisors. The board members are from the local community and they meet monthly, manage the facility, and police the day-to-day operations of the facility. They collect fees for the recreational and commercial boat slips. The boat slips are 85% to 90% recreational and 15% to 10% commercial. The boat ramp is used 80% to 90% by recreational fishermen. The commercial fishermen usually rent slips in the harbor and may use the ramp to get to the slips or during severe weather conditions. Last year, a voluntary collection box was instituted, for those using the boat ramp. They would like to continue with the boat ramp fee to provide funding for maintenance of the facility, but provide a discount for licensed recreational saltwater anglers. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries originally maintained the boat ramp at the facility, but, in 2004, turned it over to Accomack County. The county representatives have not applied for any permits, yet, but they have been in discussions with the various permitting agencies to prepare. The county matching funds stem from fees collected from boat slip rentals over the last 25 years.
- L) **Saxis Fishing Pier Expansion.** Charles Tull, Mayor, Town of Saxis. **\$132,107.** Mayor Charles Tull provided a brief history of the current fishing pier and the plans for expansion. The Town provides maintenance of the pier, a dumpster, and a portable bathroom facility at a cost of \$6,820, annually. The proposed expansion would extend 200' out from the existing T-head pier and end with another 100' T-head. Mr. David Annis, Accomack-Northampton County Planning District, provided the budget calculations and will provide a corrected version for the next meeting.

- M) 2007 Hope House Fishing Excursion and Clinic. D. Hurst, C. Macin, Great Bridge Fisherman's Association. **\$2,500**. Mr. Chuck Macin said that the goal of the project is to take physically and mentally challenged young adults on a fishing trip aboard the Sally-T headboat. The Club wants to introduce these individuals to the joys of being out on the water and the wonderful sport of recreational fishing.
- N) Abundance, Distribution and Biology of Sharks and Rays in Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's Coastal Lagoons: Continuation of a Long-term Monitoring and Research Program. D. Grubbs, J. Musick, VIMS. **\$89,073**. Dr. Dean Grubbs said that this request is to provide a portion of the funding necessary to continue with the VIMS shark ecology program. He continued with the history of the program and some of the information and trends found. The federal funding for the program has been reduced by 25%. This request is to help with the costs of vessel usage, supplies, sample work-ups in the lab, and the tagging study. A request for funding has also been submitted to the Commercial Fishing Advisory Board (CFAB).
- O) Response of Summer Flounder to Hypoxia in Chesapeake Bay: Physiological Tolerances and Shifts in Habitat Use. M. Fabrizio, R. Brill, VIMS. **\$99,721**. **This item was discussed after Item Q.** Dr. Mary Fabrizio explained that this project is submitted in conjunction with Item Q below, however this project focuses on hypoxia and its effects on summer flounder. Dr. Fabrizio continued with the known movements and habitats of adult and juvenile summer flounder. Since flat fishes exhibit the behavior of burying under the bottom, this may increase the dangers associated with hypoxic areas in the Chesapeake Bay. One part of the project is to conduct a lab study to collect information on the cardio-respiratory system of captive summer flounder. The second part of the project will be a field-based acoustic tagging study, tracking the movement of summer flounder. The field study site will be on the Seaside of the Eastern Shore, in the Wachapreague area. Dr. Fabrizio continued to explain the details of the sampling procedures, for both the field study and lab study.
- P) Effects of Piscivorous Fishes on Local Juvenile Game Fish Populations. P. McGrath, J. Musick, VIMS. **\$45,530**. Mr. Pat McGrath provided an overview of the proposed project. The purpose of the project is to examine the role of predatory fish on the nursery grounds of juvenile game fish. He continued with a basic explanation of what ecosystem management was and how this project would provide necessary information for the up-river areas. Mr. McGrath described the proposed sampling areas, gear, time schedule and data to be collected. This is a one year project, and he is willing to present information to the angler's clubs.
- Q) Laboratory Investigations of the Ability of Striped Bass to Function under Low Ambient Oxygen Conditions. R. Brill, D. Gauthier, VIMS. **\$81,468**. Dr. Richard Brill's lab is located at VIMS, but he works for the National Marine Fisheries Service. Dr. Brill went on to describe what low ambient oxygen (hypoxia) conditions are and where they are located in the Chesapeake Bay system. He intends to quantify the dissolved oxygen levels necessary for striped bass survival. Once known, mathematical models may be

developed to determine how the fish will respond to the various levels of hypoxia. Also, this project will provide information on the effect of mycobacteriosis on the fish's ability to survive within the various levels of hypoxia. This is a one year project. The budget mainly consists of the salary and fringe benefits, for a post doctoral research scientist and supplies. The fish samples will be from pound nets in the Rappahannock River.

- R) Estimate and Assess Social and Economic Importance and Value of Menhaden to Chesapeake Bay Stakeholders and Region (3 Year Study). James Kirkley, VIMS. **\$1,127,235**. Mr. Jack Travelstead spoke first, on behalf of this study. Mr. Travelstead explained that this study was requested by VMRC. The total three-year study funding request was presented to the public and RFAB, but only the first year of the budget will be funded this cycle. However, a three-year funding commitment must be made, otherwise it would be a waste of time and money. Also, Mr. Travelstead mentioned that this project has been submitted, for review, by the Commercial Fishing Advisory Board (CFAB). Other funding sources are also being researched. Also, there may be modifications made both in the scope of work and the budget, forthcoming throughout the review cycle.

Dr. James Kirkley explained how the proposal was developed and briefly mentioned the environmental, economic and social impacts the study includes. The original proposal was for a 4 or 5 year study and was tapered down to this 3-year proposal. Dr. Kirkley's inclusion of some of the top people in the field of economic evaluation will help to reduce the time necessary to complete this work. The menhaden fishery is a global issue, not just an issue for the Chesapeake Bay. Ecosystem based management is the trend for the future, and the information gathered in this study will move Virginia to the forefront of this trend. Dr. Kirkley briefly explained the difference between economic values versus economic impacts. An angler willing to spend \$50 or \$15 to go fish for 2 striped bass is an example of economic value. The economic impacts would be the employment, other goods and services, and tax revenues generated from that same \$50 or \$15 fishing trip. Dr. Kirkley would work on this project exclusively, for the next three years.

The next RFAB meeting dates are March 12 for the public hearing and May 14 for the work session and final meetings.

Vice-chairman Rhodes adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m.

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