

VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
FINFISH MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

February 10, 2004 - 7:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Hon. Gordon Birkett
Hon. Russell Garrison
Jeff Deem
Dr. Ken Neill
Samuel P. Swift
Robert Weagley
Pete Nixon
Tom Powers
Lyell Jett
Douglas F. Jenkins Sr.
Chris Vaughan

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wynston D. Holbrook
James C. Kellum
Honorable William Laine, Jr.

VMRC STAFF

Jack Travelstead
Rob O'Reilly
Ellen Cosby

I. Introductions; Announcements

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM by Chairman Russell Garrison. It was noted that Wyn Holbrook would be unable to attend.

II. Approval of minutes from the December 8, 2004 meeting

The minutes were approved as written.

III. Old Business

Continued discussion of Striped Bass issues Jack Travelstead reminded members where we ended our last discussion relating to the establishment of a direct poundage system. The 2004 General Assembly is looking at HB1024 to raise license fees.

Bobby Weagley asked about using multiple tags for larger fish. For example, a 20-pound fish is worth putting two tags in it. Consider using multiple tags instead of a poundage quota for 2005.

Mr. Travelstead responded that this issue had been discussed before and it had been dismissed as not being viable. In addition, we wouldn't want to put new restrictions into effect after the start of the season.

Mr. Travelstead announced that an error was made in 2004 tag calculations; consequently, a second allotment of tags will be distributed.

Mr. Garrison inquired if transfers should be tied to specific gear types. Pete Nixon responded by explaining how the transfer process has evolved.

Mr. Weagley questioned why big fish caught in the Bay are counted against the quota? Rob O'Reilly answered with an explanation about biomass (relative index) and confirmed that they were indeed counted.

Doug Jenkins stated that he wants to work out a simple solution that is more equitable for everyone.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2004 Recreational Summer Flounder Regulations

Mr. O'Reilly gave a detailed presentation of alternatives to consider. It was noted that the Commission will need to advertise for a public hearing in March; however, the ASMFC must approve the options before the Commission considers them. A comparison of East-coast states' management was also provided. Mr. O'Reilly commented that we need to achieve a target of 741,000 fish.

Suzie Parker (Wachapreague) expressed concerns about the options being considered by the committee. She said the preferred option would be the 16 1/2 inch limit.

Mr. O'Reilly explained that the 16 1/2 inch limit would require some seasonal closure; however, the 17 or 17 1/2 inch limit would not require further closures.

Members discussed this issue, including a lower creel limit and mid-season closure times. It was generally agreed that if an additional closure was needed, that it should start the last week of July and end the first week of August (include only one weekend).

B. Exemptions for the Striped Bass and Flounder Fisheries

Mr. Travelstead gave examples of recent complaints including: insufficient landings to qualify; and extenuating circumstances. He asked members to consider whether the Commission or Commissioner should have the power to grant exemptions.

A flounder fisherman explained his case to the committee and asked for their assistance.

Jeff Deem made a motion that VMRC should consider hardship cases; the motion was seconded. Pete Nixon made an amendment to the motion, and asked that the Commission set up a committee to review hardship requests and make their recommendation to the

Commission. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

V. Next Meeting Date

No meeting was scheduled.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.