

Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Crab Management Advisory Committee (CMAC) Minutes
2600 Washington Avenue, Newport News, VA
VMRC Commission Room, 4TH Floor
Wednesday, February 18, 2015 – 4:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present

Mark Sanford
Marshall B. Cox
Ernest George
G. Wayne France
Chris Moore
Bernard Wayne Morris
Daniel Dise

VMRC Staff Present

Joe Cimino
Ande Ehlen
Joe Grist
Rachael Maulorico
Rob O'Reilly
Sally Roman

Members Absent

Tom Powers
Viola West
Kevin Wade
Honorable James Close
Honorable Lynn Haynie
Donald Porter Sr.
Ken Smith
Johnny Graham
Ken Diggs Jr.
Pete Nixon

Others Present

Gregory Percy
Tim Wivell
Dirk Sanford
Danielle McCulloch (VIMS)
Mike Sebo (VIMS)
Dr. Rom Lipcius (VIMS)

Minutes were recorded by Ande Ehlen.

I. CMAC Introductions; Announcements and Approval of January 20, 2015 Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 4:08pm and 7 members were in attendance. A recording of the minutes can be found on the agency's website. The committee could not vote to approve minutes from January 20, 2015 because a quorum was not present.

Mr. Rob O'Reilly provided the Committee with background on blue crab agents, and encouraged the committee to come up with a position on how they collectively feel about agents. Once that decision has been made, public outreach will be necessary in order to inform harvesters who use agents about potential changes. Mr. O'Reilly also reviewed previous discussions on the blue crab sanctuary, and the Commission's schedule in respect to the VIMS Winter Dredge Survey results.

II. Work Session: Round Table Discussions

1. Blue Crab Sanctuaries

The committee discussed possible adjustments to the current blue crab sanctuary boundaries and seasons. The CMAC members asked Dr. Rom Lipcius of VIMS to

review data and work with staff to compare options for: 1) changing sanctuary dates by 1 week or 2 weeks, 2) close historic 1942 sanctuary year-round for recreational and commercial crab pot use, with a modification to the southern shoreline, 3) create new sanctuary boundary that is narrower than the current sanctuary boundaries but still retains a corridor for female crabs which will be closed year-round to pots. The committee is hoping to alleviate congestion in the tributaries in exchange for longer or permanent seasonal closures. There was also discussion about the sanctuary area along the Virginia Beach oceanfront.

2. Sponge Crab Regulations

The committee felt that adjusting the sanctuary could help solve a lot of problems, including sponge-crab issues. When the CMAC has more information about data concerning adjustments to the current blue crab sanctuary boundaries and seasons, they will continue their discussion on sponge-crab issues. However, the issue with distinguishing dark coloration of sponge crabs is still troubling to the CMAC and some members requested more information on mortality rates of discarded sponge crabs.

3. Effort Controls

The VMRC staff provided the committee with data on commercial blue crab agents and effort within the fishery. The number of approved crab agents and active crab agents has increased since 2009. At the next meeting, staff will present the CMAC with more information on agent data, including where agents are harvesting. Mr. O'Reilly told the committee that changes to agents would need to be effective in 2016 to make things less confusing to harvesters that would have agents in 2015. The CMAC members in attendance recommended that the Commission cap the number of blue crab agents at 125 agents for 2015.

III. Planning for next work-session

The next work-session will continue discussion on the use of commercial blue crab agents, the blue crab sanctuary, and sponge-crabs.

IV. New Business

The CMAC finished the meeting with a discussion prompted by a Law Enforcement request to clarify the lawfulness of fishing fish pots and crab pots in the same trip. Staff clarified that eel pots, minnow pots, and fish-pots set upriver would be exempt from proposed amendments being brought for a February Public Hearing before the Commission. Staff verified with the CMAC that a mesh size of 1-square inch or less would be sufficient for the minnow-pot exemption.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 P.M.

SPECIAL NOTE: Future minutes will include motions and conclusions of items only, since there is a recording of each meeting.