

VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
FINFISH MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FINAL MINUTES

July 16, 2002 - 7:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Raymond Spence
Cathy Davenport
Hon. Gordon Birkett
Ken Neill
Kelly Place
David Agee (for Bob Pride)
John Wyatt
Tom Powers
Ernest Bowden
Douglas Jenkins
Robert Weagley
Richard Young
G.G. Crump
Pete Nixon
Warren Cosby
Larry Snider
Robert Brumbaugh

MEMBERS ABSENT

Kevin Seldon
Wayne France
Warren Cook
Greg Swift
Frank McLaughlin
Charles Williams
Lionel Jenkins
Raymond Kellum
Hon. Wayne McLeskey

I. Introductions; Announcements

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Raymond Spence.

II. Approval of minutes from the April 16, 2002 meeting

Minutes were approved as written.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. Update on Striped Bass Issues

Jack Travelstead explained that the Commission has established separate commercial striped bass quotas for the Coastal Area and Chesapeake Bay System. This action was in response to an ASMFC mandate to establish a 98,000-pound quota for Virginia's Coastal Area commercial striped bass fishery.

Rob O'Reilly distributed and explained a hand-out listing several allocation options for the 98,000-pound Coastal Area quota, as well as tables that showed historical striped bass harvest from the coastal area.

The allocation options discussed included:

1) Divide the 98,000-pound Coastal Area quota among current ITQ holders (523 as of 2/1/02) and each ITQ holder would get approximately 12 additional tags;

2) Divide the 98,000-pound Coastal Area quota only among recent Coastal Area harvesters. There were 177 harvesters who harvested from the Coastal Area during either 2001 or 2002, and 74 of this total harvested in both years;

3) Divide the 98,000-pound Coastal Area quota only among Coastal Area harvesters who have a history (1993 - 1997) of harvesting from the Coastal Area;

4) Divide the 98,000-pound Coastal Area quota only among recent (2001 - 2002) Coastal Area harvesters who also have a history (1993 - 1997) of harvesting from the Coastal Area.

Members discussed these options. The issue of whether or not the coastal fishermen should give up some of his "Bay tags" for "Coastal tags" was raised. Percentages of tags were discussed versus a straight number of tags, and members generally agreed to the idea of straight numbers of tags (e.g. two Bay tags for one Coastal tag). It was also generally agreed to base calculations on the initial allocation, and use different colored tags.

Bobby Weagley inquired about sending out a questionnaire to all striped bass permittees, asking if they would want to give up Bay tags for Coastal tags.

Mr. O'Reilly advised members to use some qualifying criteria to determine who would get Coastal tags. Members requested time to take this issue back to their groups for comments and suggestions.

B. American Shad Coastal Intercept Fishery - Final Reduction Plan

Mr. Travelstead reminded members that we must have 40 % reduction in effort by Dec. 31, 2002 and 100 % reduction by Dec. 31, 2004. The base-line 1992 - 2001 will be used to determine the degree of effort in the intercept fishery; landings may be used as a proxy for effort.

Lewis Gillingham distributed a hand-out, which outlined various options for participation in the Coastal shad fishery. It was noted that there would be a 168,000 pound quota in 2003 and 2004. In addition, staff recommends a 5%

(approximately 8,000 pounds) bycatch set-a-side, which would allow a vessel (ocean only) to retain up to ten American shad. Such a small possession limit would allow for at least 230 vessel landings. Past records (2001) indicate that fewer than 200 vessel trips were made during the eight-week spring shad season and many of these trips were directed for American shad. These landings could be tracked by Mandatory Reporting. Should the overall quota be caught, no fishermen would be allowed to possess American shad.

Doug Jenkins stated that there has been a problem with hook & line people up the rivers keeping shad. He suggested establishing a similar 5% bycatch for American shad in the rivers and Bay.

Kelly Place remarked that seminars are being conducted, where people are being taught how to catch shad and VGIF is involved with them.

Dusty Crump suggested that they let anyone fish and just close the quota when filled.

Ernie Bowden commented that there needs to be some criteria for participation, because too many people would jump into it.

C. Recreational/Commercial Gill Net Issues

Tom Powers explained that recreational gill netters are not allowed to fish on any species with a quota, which includes bluefish. However, red drum are not on this list. Mr. Powers proposed that they should recommend a change and allow bluefish to be taken by recreational gill netters and red drum be prohibited. He also recommended leaving the rest of the species as status quo.

There was some discussion by members. Mr. Bowden suggested allowing the recreational limit on all species caught with gill net.

Pete Nixon made a motion to pass by this issue. The motion was seconded and was approved by members.

D. Gill Net Marking Rules

Mr. Nixon brought this issue to the committee, because of the problem of losing gill net marking flags and buoys at the lower end of the Bay. With heavy boat traffic and rough weather, it is not uncommon to lose either a flag or a ball off one end of a net. Since the flags and balls are required to have matching numbers or letters, it is not always possible to carry the correct spare flag or ball. Law Enforcement allows no tolerance for mismatched gill net markers, so this has become a real problem for the fishermen. There is not as much of a problem matching color.

There was some discussion on how to solve this problem.

Mr. Nixon made a motion to do away with "like" symbols on gill net flags and balls and only require the fisherman's "last4" numbers. If using two flags, require using the same color. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

No VIMS representatives were present, so the VIMS report on shallow water user conflicts was deferred until next month.

Mr. Crump proposed that the Commission ask the General Assembly to make it a misdemeanor to run through a net with a boat. He said it is a real problem up the rivers with bass boats running through nets. In addition, the bass boaters are now hiding their numbers under the rim of their boat. He noted that the river nets are well-marked, with every float painted with fluorescent paint.

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for August 20, 2002 at 7:00 PM.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM.