

**Virginia Recreational Fishing Advisory Board
Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Monday, January 10, 2005 - 7:00 PM
Minutes**

Members Present

George Hudgins
Edward Rhodes
Carolyn Brown
Charles Randolph
John Barr
Jesse Duell
Charles Southall

Members Absent

Jim Deibler
Carlisle Bannister

I. Introduction, announcements, comments.

Chairman George Hudgins opened the meeting at 7:05 PM. Rob O'Reilly announced Jack Travelstead was in Washington, DC, stuck in traffic, and will not be able to attend. Mr. Travelstead will present an update on Wallop-Breaux projects at the next meeting.

II. Status of Fund; Review of Wallop-Breaux Fund

Jane McCroskey referenced materials sent to Board members detailing monies yet to be spent on approved projects and funds available for continuation projects. Ms. McCroskey projected \$1,209,398 would be available for projects as of 30 September 2005.

III. Review of Minutes from the November 8, 2004 RFAB meeting

The minutes from the November 8, 2004 meeting were approved as written.

IIIA. Status Report—DGIF Boating Access Maintenance Fund

Chairman Hudgins indicated DGIF had inadvertently been omitted from the agenda. Stephen Kesler (Boating Access Program Manager) addressed the Board on behalf of DGIF and provided a status report. Mr. Kesler submitted a two-page, detailed account of money spent for each saltwater boating access site in the last six-month period.

IV. Multi-Year Projects for Renewal

A. 2005 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic. Wesley Brown. \$6000

If funded, this will be the 5th year of the project. The Kiwanis Club plans to increase the number of children participating to 250 in 2005. Charles Southall requested a definition of "other donations" as listed on the budget page and was informed these donations would be in the form of cash and supplies.

B. Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-year American eel, in the Virginia Tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. Marcel Montane, VIMS; \$29,929.00

Marcel Montane (VIMS) said this survey was begun in 2001 and was mandated by the ASMFC American Eel Fishery Management Plan. Mr. Montane provided the Board with additional background information during his Power-Point presentation. Carolyn Brown asked whether the survey would be "ongoing." Short answer was, yes. The survey is designed to provide an index (similar to the striped bass young-of-the-year survey) and the index only becomes meaningful when carried out yearly with the same methodology.

C. Establishment of a Chesapeake Bay Trophic Interaction Laboratory Services Program. Chris Bonzek, VIMS; \$95,000

Chris Bonzek (VIMS) explained this was the third and final year of the project, which examines stomach contents (to determine trophic interactions) of recreationally important fish on a regional basis. The project has established a website to make their findings more accessible to the public. The project has been, and continues to be, a cooperative effort, where other researchers provide samples (fish stomachs) from other projects at no or very little cost.

D. Enhancing SAV Habitat: Research and Education for Restoration.
Dr. Bob Orth, VIMS; \$93,966.00

Dr. Bob Orth (VIMS) said this project is part of the continuing effort to enhance sea grass beds on the lower Bay. Objectives for 2005 include: 1. conduct transplantings and seed dispersal of large areas while conducting experiments to optimize growth and spread of sea grasses; 2. monitor success of previously planted areas; and 3. work with CBF and state management groups to assist baywide SAV restoration. Dr. Orth indicated NOAA, the Army Corp., and the Keith Campbell Foundation also provide funding for SAV restoration.

V. New Projects

E. Investigation of Mycobacteriosis in Chesapeake Bay Striped Bass: Large Scale Field Survey and Molecular Diagnostics, David T. Gauthier, VIMS; \$78,448.00

This study would use the existing VIMS CHESMAP trawl survey as a sampling platform and projected the examination of approximately 500 striped bass per year. The prevalence of Mycobacteriosis would be determined and the severity of the disease in each fish would be measured. Further, molecular diagnostic tools would determine the species of mycobacteria (several have been identified) present in diseased fish. The study would attempt to answer--when do fish become infected; what are the risk factors; is the disease outbreak getting better or worse; and do the bacteria species pose a human health treat? The Board raised questions concerning the relationship between this project and other projects funded by the Board that examined Mycobacteriosis. The investigator said there were definite differences among projects based on assessing Mycobacteriosis.

F. Visual Function in Chesapeake Bay sportfishes: striped bass, weakfish, spotted seatrout, Atlantic croaker, spot and red drum. Andrij Harodysky, VIMS; \$42,838.00

This study would attempt to determine what color(s) and with what range each species is able to see; how each fish sees movement and with what level of detail. Answers to these questions could improve

angler success. The cost of this study is modest because VIMS has the necessary equipment to perform this analysis.

- G. What is the cause of menhaden recruitment failure? Quantifying the role of striped bass predation. Drs. Cynthia Jones and Nathan Smith, ODU; \$76,186.00

To answer this question, the study would use stable isotope analysis of carbon and nitrogen to quantify the diet composition of individual striped bass on a seasonal basis. Menhaden, because they are filter feeders, have a unique isotope signature that is easily identified and their contribution to the striped bass diet could be deduced. This data would allow the researchers to estimate the impact of striped bass on menhaden recruitment.

- H. Virginia Saltwater Angler's Guide – 3rd Edition, Claude Bain, VMRC; \$208,500.00

Claude Bain indicated this request would produce 150,000 copies of a revised and expanded edition of the Virginia Saltwater Angler's Guide that would be available for distribution in January 2006. Mr. Bain identified specific sections of the current Guide that would be substantially changed. Mr. Bain offered alternatives (such as an undated Artificial Reef Guide) should the Board chose not to fund a third printing of this document at this time. An audience member asked if this Guide could be a web-based publication.

- I. Estimating Relative Juvenile Abundance of Recreationally Important Finfish and Crustaceans in the Virginia Portion of Chesapeake Bay. Dr. Herbert Austin, VIMS; \$386,030.00

VIMS has conducted a long-term (50 years) effort to monitor and assess the condition of fishery stocks in the lower Chesapeake Bay through the use of scientific trawl surveys. Data from the yearly survey provide indices of year class strength for many recreational finfish species. Marcel Montane (VIMS) stated the trawl survey had been funded from a variety of sources the past 15 years. From 1991 through 2001, the survey was supported by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wallop-Breaux apportionments. However, Wallop-Breaux funds were reduced significantly after 2001, and monies from the

Recreational Fishing Development supported the survey in 2002 and 2003. Since 2003, the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office has funded the survey. For 2005, VIMS has requested funding from NOAA but there is no assurance the survey will be funded. This proposal is being submitted to the VFAB to request emergency funding to continue this critically important finfish and blue crab monitoring program for an additional year.

J. Fixed Dock Reconstruction and Floating Access Dock, John Hanna, The Watermen's Museum; \$333,975.00

Hurricane Isabel destroyed an existing pier/dock at the museum in September 2003. The proposed project would reconstruct a fixed pier of 236 feet with a floating "L" head, 13 feet wide by 132 feet long. The reconstruction of the pier would permit the continuation of contracts with several charter boats, who provide fishing opportunities on the York River and Chesapeake Bay.

VI. Tentative dates for the 2005 RFAB Meetings

Chairman Hudgins asked the Board if there were any conflicts with the proposed meeting schedule for 2005 (First Cycle—March 14, April 11 and May 9; Second Cycle—July 11, September 12, October 11 and November 14). No conflicts were identified.