

# VMRC FISHERIES NEWS

VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION PLANS & STATISTICS 1-800-937-9237

VOLUME 9 ISSUE 2 SUMMER 2001

## BLUE CRAB HARVEST REDUCTION EFFORTS

### THREE NEW CRABBING MEASURES ADOPTED TO REACH A 5% HARVEST REDUCTION

On April 24, 2001, the Commission adopted the following three blue crab conservation measures that became effective May 1, 2001. These measures will enable Virginia to reach its goal of a 5 percent harvest reduction in the blue crab fishery during 2001, if crab abundance continues at recent levels:

1. **Peeler pots and hard crab pots:** It shall be unlawful for any person using crab pot or peeler pot to engage in any commercial crabbing activities including the placing, setting, moving, baiting or fishing of crab pots or peeler pots during any Wednesday, from June 6 through August 22. Please refer to regulation **4VAC 20-270-40. Season Limits** (section B)
2. **Crab dredge fishery:** The daily blue crab harvest limit has been reduced from a 20 barrel to a 17 barrel limit. Please refer to regulation **4VAC 20-40-20. Catch Limit**.
3. **Recreational fishery:** Any person who holds a 5-pot license, trot line (300' maximum) or single crab trap license is now limited to a daily limit of 1 bushel hard crabs, and 2 dozen peelers. Please refer to regulation **4VAC 20-670-25. Harvest Limits**.

### CRABBING LICENSE MORATORIUM EXTENDED UNTIL MAY 26, 2004

On May 22, 2001, the Commission adopted an amendment to Regulation 4 VAC 20-1040-10 et seq., to extend the moratorium on the sales of additional crabbing licenses. The purpose is to continue to cap and control fishing effort in the crab fisheries until the blue crab stock stabilizes. The effective date of this regulation is May 26, 2001 and the moratorium shall end on May 26, 2004.

#### 4 VAC 20-1040-20. License Sales Moratorium

A. Except as provided in B, below, additional commercial licenses for crab pots, peeler pots, crab scrapes, crab traps, ordinary trot lines, patent trot lines, and crab dip nets for the 2000 crabbing season shall not be sold after May 25, 2000. Crabbing licenses sold for the 2001, 2002 and 2003 crabbing seasons shall be issued only to those registered commercial fishermen who held the identical valid crabbing license in 2000.

crab traps, ordinary trot lines, patent trot lines, and crab dip nets may be transferred to an immediate family member of the licensee and, in the case of death or incapacitation of the licensee, may be transferred to a registered commercial fisherman. Crabbing licenses also may be transferred to another registered commercial fisherman, if the licensee's boat or vessel and gear used for crabbing are also transferred or sold to the registered commercial fisherman. All such transfers shall be documented on forms provided by the Commission and shall be subject to the approval of the Commissioner.

- C. The moratorium on the sale of commercial licenses for crab pots, peeler pots, crab scrapes, crab traps, ordinary trot lines, patent trot lines, and crab dip nets shall end on May 26, 2004.



*This newsletter provides only a summary of management measures adopted by the Commission and has no legal force or effect. Please refer to the regulation cited for legal documentation. To obtain a complete copy of the regulations call 757-247-2248 or access the VMRC homepage: (<http://www.state.va.us/mrc/homepage>)*

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B. Commercial licenses for crab pots, peeler pots, crab scrapes,

## FISHERY REGULATION CHANGES

### BLUEFISH



On April 24, 2001, the Commission amended regulation **4 VAC 20-450-10 et seq., "Pertaining to the Taking Of Bluefish"**, to establish the annual bluefish landings quota for Virginia. Bluefish are currently managed under a joint Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council/Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Bluefish Fishery Management Plan. States are required to adopt the provisions of this plan in accordance with the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. All states from Maine to Florida are required to comply with the Bluefish FMP. The effective date of this regulation is May 1, 2001.

#### **Regulation 4 VAC 20-450-30. Commercial Landings Quota.**

- A. During the period of January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2001, commercial landings of bluefish shall be limited to 1,138,412 pounds.

### SCUP



On April 24, 2001, the Commission amended Regulation **4 VAC 20-910-10 et seq., "Pertaining to Scup"**, for the 2001 summer period, in order to maintain compliance with the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Scup as required by the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. The effective date of this regulation is May 1, 2001.

#### **Regulation 4 VAC 20-910-45. Possession Limits and Harvest Quotas.**

- C. During the period May 1 through October 31 of each year, the commercial harvest and landing of scup in Virginia shall be limited to 2,774 pounds.

### BLACK SEABASS



On May 22, 2001, the Commission amended regulation **4 VAC 20-950-10 et seq., "Pertaining to Black Sea Bass"**, to reduce the probability of quarterly quota overages and early closure of the commercial fishery. The effective date of this regulation is May 25, 2001.

#### **4VAC 20-950-45. Possession Limits and Harvest Quotas**

- A. During the period January 1 through March 31 of each year, it shall be unlawful for any person to possess aboard any vessel or to land in Virginia more than 9,000 pounds of black sea bass, except when it is announced that 75% of the coastwide quota for this period has been taken; then, it shall be unlawful for any person to possess aboard any vessel or land in Virginia more than 4,500 pounds of black sea bass, until such time that the coastwide quota for this period has been reached.
- B. During the period April 1 through June 30 of each year, it shall be unlawful for any person to possess aboard any vessel or to land in Virginia more than 1,500 pounds of black sea bass. When it is announced that 40% of the coastwide quota for this period is projected to have been taken; then, the provisions of subsection E of this section shall apply.
- C. During the period July 1 through September 30 of each

year, it shall be unlawful for any person to possess aboard any vessel or to land in Virginia more than 1,000 pounds of black sea bass. When it is announced that 40% of the coastwide quota for this period is projected to have been taken; then, the provisions of subsection E of this section shall apply.

- D. During the period October 1 through December 31 of each year, it shall be unlawful for any person to possess aboard any vessel or to land in Virginia more than 2,000 pounds of black sea bass. When it is announced that 40% of the coastwide quota for this period is projected to have been taken; then, the provisions of subsection E of this section shall apply.
- E. When it is announced that 40% of the coastwide quota for any of the periods designated in subsections B, C, and D of this section has been taken, it shall be unlawful for any person to do any of the following:

1. Possess aboard any vessel in Virginia waters more than 1,000 pounds of black sea bass.
2. Land black sea bass in Virginia, for commercial purposes, more than four times within each consecutive seven-day period, with the first seven-day period beginning upon the announcement that 40 percent of the coastwide quota for the period has been taken.
3. Land in Virginia more than a total of 1,000 pounds of black sea bass during each consecutive seven-day period, with the first seven-day period beginning upon the announcement that 40% of the coastwide quota for the period has been taken.
4. Fail to contact within 24 hours of landing, the Marine Resources Commission's Interactive Voice Recording system to report the name of the vessel and fisherman and the weight of each landing of black sea bass.

### RECREATIONAL SUMMER FLOUNDER 2001 SEASON



On May 22, 2001, the Commission amended Regulation **4 VAC 20-620-10 et seq., "Pertaining to Summer Flounder"**, to reduce recreational fishing mortality, in order to rebuild the depleted stocks of Summer Flounder. The effective date of this regulation is June 1, 2001.

#### **4 VAC 20-620-70. Recreational Fishing Season.**

- A. The recreational fishing season shall be closed from January 1 through March 28, and from July 24 through August 7.
- B. It shall be unlawful for any person fishing recreationally to take, catch, or possess any Summer Flounder during any closed recreational fishing season.
- C. Nothing in this regulation shall prohibit the landing of Summer Flounder in Virginia which were legally harvested in the Potomac River.

## REGULATION CHANGES CONTINUED.....

### GREY TROUT BYCATCH



On June 26, 2001, the Commission amended regulation **4 VAC 20-380-10 et seq.**, "Pertaining to Grey Trout (Weakfish)" to promote conservation and to clarify the by-catch requirements associated with a closed season. The effective date of this regulation is July 1, 2001.

#### **4 VAC 20-380-50.** Commercial Fishing Season.

- E. During any closed season, the possession limit for grey trout shall be for the boat or vessel, as described in subdivisions 1 and 2 of this subsection.
1. The boat or vessel possession limit for grey trout shall be the lesser of 450 pounds or an amount equal to the total number of registered commercial fishermen or seafood landing licensees on board multiplied by 150 pounds, except that only one license per person, either the commercial fisherman's registration license or seafood landing license, shall be used to calculate the boat or vessel possession limit.
  2. The possession of quantities of grey trout in excess of these limits, or the possession of any grey trout less than 12 inches in total length, shall be a violation of this regulation. The captain or operator of the boat or vessel shall be responsible for any boat or vessel possession and size limit.

### CONCH POTS

On June 26, 2001, the Commission adopted provisions of emergency regulation **4 VAC 20-890-10 et seq.**, "Pertaining to Channeled Whelk", as a permanent regulation, to promote the general welfare of the seafood industry by avoiding gear conflicts proximate to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The effective date of this regulation is July 1, 2001.

#### **4 VAC 20-890--25.** Entry Limitation; Transfers; Prohibitions.

- C. It shall be unlawful for any person licensed as a commercial conch-pot fisherman to do any of the following, unless otherwise specified:
8. It shall be unlawful for any person to set, place, or fish a conch pot of any type in an area extending 250 yards from either span of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel. For purposes of this section, the distance shall be measured from the outer edges of each span and shall extend from the low water mark on Fisherman's Island to the one-mile marker on the south end of the bridge-tunnel.



### MANDATORY HARVEST REPORTING

On June 26, 2001, the Commission amended regulation **4 VAC 20-610-10 et seq.**, "Pertaining to Commercial Fishing and Mandatory Harvest Reporting", to promote the authority and

intent of the Code of Virginia, as regards revocations of licenses. The effective date of this regulation is July 1, 2001.

#### **4 VAC 20-610-30.** Commercial Fisherman Registration License Exceptions.

- A. In accordance with §28.2-241C of the Code of Virginia, only persons who hold a valid Commercial Fisherman Registration License may sell, trade or barter their catch, or give their catch to another, in order that it may be sold, traded, or bartered. Only these licensees may sell their catches from Virginia tidal waters, regardless of the method or manner in which caught. Exceptions to the requirement to register as a commercial fisherman for selling catch are authorized for the following persons only:

1. Persons taking menhaden under the authority of licenses issued pursuant to §28.2-402 of the Code of Virginia.
2. Persons independently harvesting and selling, trading, or bartering no more than three gallons of minnows per day who are not part of, hired by, or engaged in a continuing business enterprise.
  - a. Only minnow pots, a cast net or a minnow seine less than twenty-five feet in length may be used by persons independently harvesting minnows.
  - b. All other marine species taken during the process of harvesting minnows shall be returned to the water immediately.



3. Any person, whose commercial fisherman registration license or fishing gear license is not revoked by the Marine Resources Commission pursuant to Section 28.2-232 of the Code of Virginia, is authorized to possess the registration license of a commercial fisherman in order to serve as an agent for fishing the commercial fisherman's gear and selling the catch. No commercial fisherman shall use more than one person as an agent at any time. The agent shall possess the registration license and gear license of the commercial fisherman, when fishing. When transporting or selling a commercial fisherman's catch, the agent shall possess either the registration license of that commercial fisherman or a bill of lading indicating that fisherman's name, address, commercial fisherman registration license number, date and amount of product to be sold.

### SPINY DOGFISH CLOSURE

The spiny dogfish commercial quota for the 2001 Period I has been attained. As of Friday, June 22, 2001, no vessel entering or harvesting from Virginia Waters may possess any spiny dogfish for commercial purposes. The closure shall continue through October 31, 2001.



## COMMISSION APPROVES FUNDING FOR PROJECTS

### COMMERCIAL FISHING ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

On April 24, 2001, the Commission approved the recommendations of the Commercial Fishing Advisory Board (CFAB) to help partially fund the two projects listed below:

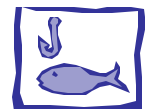
1. A telephone survey of harvest and effort in the 2001 Virginia Recreational Blue Crab Fishery. The Virginia Marine Resources Commission will manage the survey.
2. Assessment of Sea Turtle Population through aerial surveys. The Virginia Institute of Marine Science will be conducting the study.



### RECREATIONAL FISHING ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

On May 22, 2001, the Commission approved the recommendations of the Recreational Fishing Advisory Board (RFAB) on funding for the following projects:

- A. Seagrass habitat: A continuing partnership in research and education for restoration in the 21st century. VIMS, \$88,276.00
- B. Support of facilities to provide finfish aging for Virginia catches and application of virtual population analysis to provide management advice. ODU, \$237,756.00
- C. Sport utility 4-wheel drive vehicles for law enforcement use. VMRC, \$57,000.00
- D. Law enforcement vessels for the Virginia marine Patrol. VMRC, \$156,040.00
- E. Estimating relative abundance of recreationally important finfish in the Virginia portion of the Chesapeake Bay. VIMS, \$184,169.00
- F. A delineation of Shark Nursery Grounds in the Chesapeake Bay and an assessment of shark stocks. VIMS, \$19,875.00\*
- G. Scarring effects on submerged aquatic vegetation in Virginia (year 2). VIMS, \$30,081.00
- H. Mycobacteriosis in striped bass of the Chesapeake Bay. VIMS, \$30,173.00
- I. Conservation through education. Virginia Marine Science Museum, \$6,100.00\*
- J. Glebe Point Public Fishing Pier. County of Northumberland, \$24,000.00



\* represents a portion of the funding request.

## MANDATORY HARVEST REPORTING



When filling out your harvest reports please use the following guidelines:

- Reports are due by the 5th of each month.
- Use black or blue ink when filling out reports.
- Include unit of measure for your harvest amount.
- Be sure to send the "VMRC copy" of the report.
- Make sure your hours are calculated correctly.
- Print name and commercial number on top of forms.
- Use abbreviation for species, water bodies and gear types provided on the inside of the folder.
- When reporting crabs you are to report peeler crabs harvested, NOT the amount of soft crabs shed.

- Be sure to include other watermen's commercial card numbers if they are working with you.
- Please do not combine gear types.

The new forms require additional information:

- Be sure to include the vessel name (if applicable) not the vessel make or model.
- Always include the vessel number (assigned to vessel when registered).
- Hours worked is the amount of man hours spent on harvesting with the gear.
- Include the amount of crewmembers working with you.



# MARINE SCIENCE RESEARCH

## RAPA WHELK UPDATE



Bounty Program Revisions - effective 16 April 2001

A bounty of \$5 per snail will be paid for LIVE rapa whelks. Whelks must be alive at the time that they are given to VIMS personnel. A bounty of \$2 per snail will be paid for DEAD rapa whelks or empty rapa whelk shells.

Please maintain rapa whelks in fresh seawater until they are picked up by VIMS personnel. Please do NOT hold rapa whelks in a freezer.

To report a whelk, please call the Rapa Whelk Reporting Line at (804) 684-7361. Arrangements will be made to pick-up the whelk(s) from you at your convenience.

The current range of samples is from the mouth of the Rappahannock in the north, to the Bay Bridge tunnel in the south-east, to just above the James River Bridge in the south west. For research updates, please visit the *Rapana* Research Internet Web Site ([www.vims.edu/fish/oyreef/rapven.html](http://www.vims.edu/fish/oyreef/rapven.html)).

## OYSTER AQUACULTURE

### *The Suminoe Oyster*



Oysters, one of the most important resources in the Chesapeake Bay, both economically and environmentally, have declined dramatically in recent years. Many consider oysters to be a tasty delicacy which is why they are economically important to the commercial seafood industry. Oysters are important environmentally because they help improve water clarity and light penetration throughout the bay by filtering sediment and algae. Oysters also form reefs, providing important habitat to support a diversity of marine organisms.

The declining oyster population has prompted the General Assembly to appoint scientists at VIMS with the task of researching the use of non-native oysters in aquaculture. In the past, most of the oyster research has focused on restoration efforts which included the possibility of introducing a disease resistant, fast growing, non-native species to the Chesapeake Bay, but there has been a lot of controversy over this issue because the impact it could have on the ecology is still unclear. For this study, scientists will keep the foreign oysters in cages, and genetically alter them so that they can not reproduce, thus decreasing the probability of them having a negative impact on the ecology of the Bay.

Currently, researchers at VIMS are testing the Suminoe oyster, *Crassostrea ariakensis*, as a possible candidate for aquaculture. The Suminoe oyster is native to the estuaries of Japan, China, India and Pakistan. Field studies of this oyster in the Chesapeake Bay have indicated that the oysters are fast growers, they appear to be more tolerant to lower salinities than our native oyster, and they have a resistance to the diseases MSX and Dermo, that have plagued our native oyster population. The Suminoe oyster tastes

a little different than *C. Virginica*, our native oyster, but it has been said that they are just as good. Researchers believe this foreign oyster could be used to generate a strong and prosperous aquaculture industry. These oysters could also be used to help aid in our oyster restoration efforts by using their shells for reef building, and in developing disease-resistant native oysters. As funding will allow, VIMS scientists will continue to explore the possibilities and impacts resulting from the introduction of *C. ariakensis* aquaculture.

## BLUE CRAB AQUACULTURE



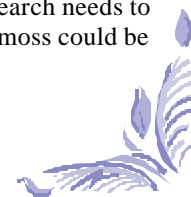
The blue crab industry is regarded as the most valued commercial fishery in Virginia. The blue crab population is at an all time low and has many concerned for the future of the fishery. Several regulations have been adopted to help conserve blue crabs for future generations, but not without creating further hardship for those fishermen who are already struggling to make a living.

According to an article in "The Sun"-Baltimore, MD., scientists at the Center of Marine Biotechnology (COMB) are researching the reproduction of blue crabs in hatcheries. The studies will focus on the life cycle, basic biology, and habitat restoration of the blue crab. They will also examine ways to improve and develop hatchery technologies. The study is based on one in Japan in which they developed a hatchery that has annually produced and released millions of juvenile swimming crabs, closely related to the Atlantic blue crab.

Some scientists argue that this project isn't worth the money or effort because there is no statistical evidence that shows the success rate of the juvenile crabs released from the hatcheries in Japan. Furthermore, our hatcheries would also have to release 10 times as many as they did in Japan in order to increase the size of the population of blue crabs in the Chesapeake Bay. Despite all of the skepticism, scientists working on the project believe they will gain a better understanding of the blue crab even if the hatcheries aren't an economical success.

## PEAT MOSS KEEPS FISH FRESH?

Researchers from Norway have discovered a reactive sugar in peat moss that can preserve fish. Fish will stay fresh for about a month and the growth of bacteria will be delayed for over a week after it has been stored in the moss between 9 and 28 days. More research needs to be done, but if tests are successful, peat moss could be used worldwide as a cheap preservative.



## VMRC CALENDAR

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
<b>VMRC</b> – 8/28 9:30 AM <b>CMAC</b> -8/ 8 7 PM <b>MAFMC</b> – 8/6- 8/9 Philadelphia, PA <b>FMAC</b> – 8/21 7 PM	<b>VMRC</b> - 9/25 9:30 AM <b>FMAC</b> – 9/17 7 PM	<b>VMRC</b> – 10/23 9:30 AM <b>MAFMC</b> – 10/ 9-11 New Bern, NC <b>ASMFC</b> – October 30-November 1 Maine

The meeting dates and times are tentative and subject to change. Please call to verify the date and time of the meeting you would like to attend.

**VMRC**– Virginia Marine Resources Commission. Meetings set on the 4th Tuesday of each month. Meetings begin at 9:30 A.M. (fisheries items are generally considered after 12 noon). Held at the Commission’s main office in Newport News. **NOTE: Please call the Agency to confirm the date and time on scheduled meetings.**

**FMAC**— Finfish Management Advisory Committee. Meetings generally the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7 P.M.

Held at the Commission’s main office in Newport News.

**RFAB**— VMRC Recreational Fishing Advisory Board. Meetings generally begin 7 PM Held at Commission main office.

**CMAC**— Clam Management Advisory Committee. Meetings to be announced. Meetings begin at 7 PM. Held at Commission main office.

**MFAMC** -Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Call (302) 674-2331 to find out the meeting location.

### THE DOLPHIN ARE COMING!!!!

As working watermen, you know that bottlenose dolphin are already here, but what is coming is a federal Take Reduction plan for Bottlenose Dolphin that will directly affect the way most of you work. When completed, the Plan will likely have the greatest impact on those of you that fish gill nets, pound nets or haul seines in the lower Bay or in the ocean out to six miles.

Currently, the Plan is in its early developmental stages and information from fishermen would be of great benefit. Mr. Bill Foster, a working gill net fishermen from Hatteras, North Carolina, has been appointed as the Southeast Regional Outreach Coordinator to assist fishermen. Mr. Foster will be the featured speaker at the Finfish Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) meeting, on September 17, 2001, 7 PM, at the Marine Resources Commission meeting room, Fourth Floor, 2600 Washington Avenue, Newport News, Virginia. Bill will provide an overview of the Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Plan process and discuss potential gear modifications. Will these gear modifications work for Virginia watermen? We urge you to attend this meeting and provide input.



### PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing has been scheduled for the August 28, 2001 Commission meeting to establish a recreational eel pot license costing \$10.00 and limiting the licensee to two eel pots, pursuant to HB 1572 adopted by the 2001 General Assembly.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
 MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION  
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