

OFFICIAL MINUTES

RFAB MEETING 1/13/03

Members Present

Mr. George Hudgins
Mr. Ed Rhodes
Mr. Charles Randolph
Mr. Jesse Duell
Mr. John Barr
Ms. Carolyn Brown
Mr. Andy Ligon

Members Absent

Mr. Jim Deibler
Mr. Carlisle Bannister

At 7:03pm Chairman George Hudgins called the meeting to order, He then asked Mr. Cory Routh to make the introductions.

Mr. Routh welcomed Mr. John Barr and Mr. Carlisle Bannister to the Recreational Fishing Advisory Board (RFAB).

Mr. Routh stated that the projected amount available in September 30, 2003 will be \$1,516,669.00 and that there is \$1,679,420.00 in projects requesting funding from the Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund (VSRFDF).

Mr. Routh then requested that the draft minutes from the November 2002 RFAB meeting be made official. Mr. Rhodes made a motion to accept the minutes as official. The motion was seconded by Mr. Randolph and was passed unanimously by the board.

Mr. Routh then asked Mr. Mark Kline of Northampton County to clarify the county's intentions of charging a fee at the ramp site. Mr. Kline stated that the County's intentions were to seek council from the RFAB before charging fees for the ramp. He also stated that, at this point, the county is not considering a fee for ramp usage. Mr. Rhodes made a motion that Northampton County must obtain permission from the RFAB prior to charging a fee and at that time the county will be required to submit a proposed budget to justify the use of fees. Ms. Brown, seconded the motion. Mr. Randolph stated that the precedence for charging a fee has been set, so it is hard to deny future applicants the right to charge a fee. The board passed Mr. Rhodes motion unanimously.

Mr. Hudgins then started the presentations of project proposals.

A.

Dr. Austin stated that the VIMS trawl survey is the oldest survey of it kind and is used by various agencies to measure the success of fisheries management plans. He stated that in the past the project received federal funding, but that was lost. Dr. Austin stated that their request is for the interim and that they are seeking other sources of funding and return unused funding. Mr. Hudgins asked how long would it take to receive alternate funding. Dr. Austin said that it could take from 4 to 8 months. Mr. Hudgins stated that if Dr. Austin received the alternate funding in time that the RFAB would not have to fund the project. Dr. Austin said that this was correct. Mr. Ligon asked if this study was mandated.

Dr. Austin stated that parts of this study are mandated and should be continued. Mr. Barr asked why there was a significant increase from last years request. Mr. Austin stated that the increase was needed to keep up with salaries. Mr. Barr stated that the increase was 60.5% more that last year.

B. 2003 Finfish Ageing

Dr. Steve Bobko made the presentation on Dr. Cynthia Jones behalf. Dr. Bobko said that the ASFMC requires the state of Virginia to age striped bass by scales. Over the past 5 years ODU has been collecting scales as well as otoliths. Dr. Bobko stated that scales typically underestimate the age of fish. He stated that by according to this data striped bass are currently older than previously believed and that this could lead to greater harvests for the recreational angler. Dr. Bobko stated that this data would be used to counter recommendations imposed on Virginia by other. Mr. Barr asked where the \$20,000 for fish purchases was spent. Dr. Bobko stated that these fish are purchased from the commercial anglers and packing houses. Dr. Bobko stated that this was the best was to insure a complete and timely sample.

C. Boat Scarring Effects on SAV

Dr. Bob Orth from VIMS stated after the analysis of 13 years of aerial photos, the study results show that the significant scarring occurs from commercial haul seining. Dr. Orth said that they are currently trying to determine the recover time for damaged Seagrass beds. Dr. Orth stated that this study is going to help develop the appropriate solutions to protect the grass beds in areas heavily used by recreational and commercial users. Mr. Barr asked how long it will take to achieve the programs goal? Dr. Orth said that that depends on the development of management strategies, although there is no firm deadline. Mr. Rhodes asked if there was any replanting in this study. Dr. orth stated that currently all the re-growth for this project is naturally occurring.

D. Enhancing SAV Habitat

Dr. Orth started with a basic review of this project. Dr. Orth stated that the seagrass beds have been declining since the 1930's. He stated that the beds that used to exist in the upper bay and tributaries are no longer there. Dr. Orth stated that current research could eventually result in extensive restoration programs throughout the Chesapeake Bay. Dr. Orth said that, possibly, in two years this project will receive federal funding and will not need to come before the RFAB.

E. Estimating Relative Abundance of YOY American Eel.

Mr. Montane stated that ASMFC adopted and interstate FMP for American eel in 1999. This plan mandated eel research for all stated involved with the ASMFC. Since 2001 VIMS has been conducting the YOY eel survey to meet the mandates of the ASMFC. Mr. Montane stated that this study would benefit both commercial and recreational fishermen. Mr. Ligon asked where the eel samples were collected. Mr. Montane stated that two sites are on the York River, one on the Rappahannock, and one on the James. Mr. Ligon asked if Mr. Montane was involved with Dr. Austin's trawl survey and if it was possible to combine the survey. Mr. Montane stated that the studies used totally

different sampling gear and protocols. Ms. Brown asked how long will the studies last. Mr. Montane stated that it would be a continuous project.

F. 2003 Wallop Breaux Match.

Mr. Routh stated that last year the VMRC requested \$60,000 from the RFAB and \$40,000 from the CFAB. This money was used to meet the match required for Wallop-Breaux funding. Mr. Routh stated that the VMRC again is making a request for matching funds, however because commercial monies are not available, the RFAB will be requested to make the whole match. Mr. Barr asked why was there no commercial monies available. Mr. Routh stated that the Mandatory Reporting program has exhausted all of those funds. Mr. Hudgins asked if the money did not come from Wallop-Breaux, then where would the funding come from and what would happen if the projects were not funded. Mr. Routh stated that the state could fall out of compliance and certain fisheries could be closed.

G. Kiwanis Kids Fishing Day Clinic

Mr. Wesley Brown stated that this would be the second year that the RFAB funded this project and invited all interested parties to participate in this year's event. Mr. Brown stated that the increase in the amount requested is to purchase a utility trailer for transportation and storage of the equipment. Mr. Brown stated that by buying a used trailer, he might be able to reduce the requested amount. Mr. Barr asked where the children that participates in the program come from. Mr. Brown stated that they come from various children's programs around the area.

H. Sunshine Program 2003

Mr. Denny Dobbins stated that last year's program was very successful and came under their proposed budget. He stated that the current proposal was increased so he can add another boat trip to the program. Mr. Dobbins stated that Penn International would be providing 200 rod and reel combos for the program. Mr. Dobbins stated that this year's program should involve 250 to 300 children.

I. Morley's Wharf Youth Fishing tournament

J. Saxis Pier Youth Fishing Tournament

K. Pamunkey Indian Shad Restoration.

There was no one available to present these projects.

L. Human Health Issues Related to Mycobacteriosis in Striped Bass

Ms. Martha Rhodes of VIMS thanked the RFAB for their support for past projects. She stated that past Mycobacteriosis studies funded by the RFAB have found an increasing occurrence of Mycobacterium in Striped Bass. Ms. Rhodes stated that the current proposal would address the effects of Mycobacterium on human health and what species are infectious to humans. She stated that results from this study would establish a network for physicians so that they can positively identify these infections. Ms. Rhodes stated that this study would also establish an information source for anglers as well. Ms. Rhodes stated that the expected result of this study is to better understand the significance of the outbreak of Mycobacteriosis that occur in 3 out of every 4 striped bass examined

by VIMS. Ms. Rhodes stated that infected fish have been found all over the bay and coastal waters of Virginia. Mr. Barr asked if the problem was significant enough for it to be a public health risk, and therefore investigated by other health organizations. Ms. Rhodes stated that because the proposal focuses on a sub-population of the public, those handling infected fish, and is not communicable (person to person), then it is not considered a general public health risk. Mr. Randolph asked if there was any funding being solicited from EVMS or other public health agency. Ms. Rhodes said that they would give support but did not plan to fund the research.

M. Determining Stock Status of Tautog in Virginia.

Dr. John Hoenig of VIMS stated that the focus of this project was to provide the information necessary to set the fishing season for tautog in Virginia. Dr. Hoenig stated that tautog was managed by the ASMFC; they treated all of the eastern coast tautog as one stock. This data was combined and the resulting estimate of fishing mortality concluded that the stock is over fished. Dr. Hoenig stated that as a result the ASMFC made every state cut back fishing effort by 29%. Dr. Hoenig stated that data might show that Virginia's tautog mortality rates might be lower than other northern states and therefore 29% may be too much of a reduction for Virginia. ASMFC mandates state that states may be able to change their percentages if they can prove that mortality rates are less than those of other states. Dr. Hoenig stated that by using available data he was able to estimate that the mortality rates are substantially lower than the threshold. Tagging data shows that the Virginia stock seems to stay in Virginia, therefore a reduction in New York would not help Virginia. Dr. Hoenig stated that New York has the highest rate of mortality for tautog. Dr. Hoenig stated that this study would help to update data that should prove that mortality rates are lower in Virginia.

N. Genetic Analysis of Population Structure within Cobia

Mr. Bill Metcalfe of VIMS presented on behalf of Dr. John Graves. Mr. Metcalfe stated that whether or not Cobia exhibits a stock structure is unknown. Mr. Graves indicated that, according to tagging data Cobia show regional site fidelity. Mr. Metcalfe stated that he is trying to determine if the cobia that return to the Chesapeake Bay are a distinct group. To determine this, Mr. Graves proposes the use of Microsatellite DNA analysis. He stated that the DNA markers are already available and that he is requesting the means to apply the markers to the Chesapeake Bay Cobia. Understanding the Cobia stock structure is essential for effective management and protection of the resource.

O. Establishment of a Chesapeake Bay Trophic Interaction Lab

Mr. Chris Bonzek stated that he is requesting funding to help build a regional center for describing diet habits of fish in the Chesapeake Bay. Mr. Bonzek stated that this study would address items brought up in the Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement that deals with multi-species management. Mr. Bonzek stated that this lab would collect preserved fish stomachs then analyze and record their contents onto a large database. Mr. Ligon asked how the information would be relayed back to the recreational angler. Mr. Bonzek said that the data would be available via the Internet.

P. Daily Movement of Age Two Striped Bass in the Poropotank River

Dr. Herb Austin made the presentation on Mr. McGrath's behalf. Dr. Austin stated that age three striped bass and under remain in the Chesapeake year round. He stated that very little is known about the migration of resident fish within the Chesapeake Bay. Mr. McGrath is interesting in using sonic tags to follow these young fish through 24-hour cycles to see where these fish move.

Q. Curtis Merritt Harbor Restroom Facility

Mr. James West of the Town of Chincoteague stated that the town has received funding for the boating facility but did not receive enough funding to construct a compatible restroom. Therefore they are asking the RFAB for additional funding to construct the restroom facility. Ms. Brown asked who uses the 70 boat slips. Mr. West stated that the use is approximately 50% commercial and 50% recreational. Mr. Ligon asked if the facility would be ADA compliant. Mr. West stated that the whole facility would be ADA certified. Mr. Barr asked if there was a fee for mooring also. Mr. West stated that there is a \$1.00 per foot fee for mooring. Mr. Barr asked if there would be a discount for individuals with recreational fishing licenses. Mr. West said that he was sure that a discount would be considered. Mr. West stated that this facility was the most popular boating facility because of its quick access to the Atlantic Ocean. Mr. Rhodes asked about insurance on the facility in the event of a natural disaster. Mr. West stated that it would be insured.

R. Development of Molecular Tools for *in situ* Hybridization Studies of Mycobacteriosis.

Dr. Wolfgang Vogelbein of VIMS stated that Mycobacteriosis is a bacterial disease that occurs in fishes. The disease can infect a fish for a year or more before they die. Since 1977 mycobacteriosis has been detected in striped bass. Infection rate are highest in the late summer and fall, and the lowest during the winter and spring. Dr. Vogelbein stated that this study's goal is going to look at the potential effects on the striped bass stocks. The objective of this study is to develop molecular tools to rapidly identify mycobacterium in both environmental (water) and tissue samples.

S. Little Island Fishing Pier

Mr. Brian Solis of the City of Virginia Beach stated that the application was the same as six months ago but with some additional information. Mr. Solis stated that approximately 11,500 patrons visit the pier every year most of which are recreational anglers. Mr. Solis stated that a new heated restroom facility is currently under construction. Mr. Solis stated that the current beach replenishment would minimally affect the fishing conditions on the pier. Mr. Hudgins asked what would happen if the pier was destroyed. Mr. Solis stated that the city does not insure those structures. Mr. Barr asked what the \$3.00 fee would be used for. Mr. Solis said that it goes into the pier's operational budget. Mr. Barr asked if

there would be a discount for recreational anglers. Mr. Solis stated that they would be open to discuss this possibility.

T. Age Specific Fecundity of Bluefish

Dr. Steve Bobko of ODU stated that bluefish is believed to be made up of two spawning groups, one in the South Atlantic Bight and one in the Mid Atlantic Bight. Dr. Bobko stated that the best way to catch spawning bluefish is to charter recreational boats. Mr. Barr asked who would collect these fish. Dr. Bobko stated that there is no problem finding volunteers willing to catch bluefish. Mr. Randolph asked how many charter trips would require for completing this study. Dr. Bobko stated that 1 trip per week for 10 weeks.

U. Law Enforcement Vessels for VMP.

Colonel Steve Bowman of the Virginia Marine Police asked for funding to replace two 16-foot shallow draft boats to be used on the seaside of the eastern shore.

V. Gloucester Point Boating Access Improvements.

No one showed to make presentation for this project.

At 10:30 pm Mr. Hudgins adjourned the meeting.