

Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Crab Management Advisory Committee (CMAC) Meeting Summary
380 Fenwick Road, Fort Monroe, VA
Monday, July 29, 2024 – 4:00 P.M.

Members Present

Tye Burns
Marshall Cox
Kenneth Diggs
Spencer Headley
J.C. Hudgins
Chris Moore
Bernard “Wayne” Morris
Pete Nixon
Tom Powers
Nathan Reynolds
Cory Rice
Mark Sanford

Members Absent

Ernest George
Johnny Graham
John “Ed” Tankard III (chair)

VMRC Staff Present

Elizabeth Beyer
John Cosgrove
Jennifer Farmer
Alexa Galván
Pat Geer
Jamie Green
Brooke Lowman
Shanna Madsen
Capt. Chris Miller
Barry Mizelle
Rachael Peabody
Gerald Pitt
Lisa Pyle
Jill Ramsey
Zach Widgeon

Others Present

Ed Arnest
Trevor Bonnaville
Jerome Bonnaville
James Close
Richard Costin
Jay Diggs
John Dryden
Douglas Jenkins
Curtis Jenkins
Katie Knick (VIMS)
Mike Lightfoot
Ron Owens (PRFC)
Gabby Saluta (VIMS)
Michael Seebo (VIMS)
George Trice
Travis Voyles (SNHR)

Meeting summary was prepared by Brooke Lowman. Meeting was facilitated by Kristina Weaver (Weaver Strategies LLC).

I. Opening Remarks and Introductions

Upon confirming quorum was present, Commissioner Jamie Green called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM. Commissioner Green introduced professional meeting facilitator, Kristina Weaver, who will be leading the next few committee meetings.

II. Presentation

Alexa Galván presented background information for the committee including abundance, harvest, and exploitation rates in recent decades, historic context of the winter blue crab dredge fishery, its closure in 2008, and the previously considered framework for reopening the dredge fishery (developed in 2013), data regarding winter dredge harvest from 2000-2008, and data regarding blue crab harvest from crab pots in March and December from 2012-2023.

III. Discussion

The committee and members of the public were given several moments to write down questions, reactions, and ideas sparked by the presentation, and then the committee broke into several smaller groups to discuss their responses. Nine committee members expressed clear support for a

winter blue crab dredge fishery. Several were opposed to other crabbing sectors having to take cuts for conservation equivalency. A few members raised concerns about the dredge area proposed in 2013, citing other areas with mud bottoms and lack of access on the Eastern Shore. Three committee members did not voice support for reopening the winter dredge fishery, citing female abundance remaining under the target and unknown impacts of dredging on the female population.

The committee discussed topics including the difference between winter dredge and spring pot fisheries and markets, if a dredge season could affect the upcoming stock assessment, the effect of predation on crab abundance, and how the new daily time limits for crabbing would change fishing patterns.

IV. Next Steps

The Committee was asked to send any additional questions, comments, and requests to staff in advance of the next meeting, as well as feedback on the facilitator/process. Staff will work on fulfilling data requests and attempt to circulate meeting materials in advance.

V. Public Comment

Questions from the public that will be considered included how will entry into the dredge fishery be determined, what would bushel limits be, what impact would opening the dredge fishery have on the pot fishery, and what impact would opening the dredge fishery have on the population.

There were two public comments in favor of opening the winter blue crab dredge fishery and two public comments opposed to opening the winter blue crab dredge fishery.

James Close, crab dredger, feels that the dredge fishery was discriminated against and has been suffering under the closure since 2008. George Trice, commercial waterman, believes that dredging will be good for the bay because it “turns up the bottom.” He also wants to make sure new people are given the chance to get into the fishery. Doug Jenkins, commercial crabber, described his 76 years of crabbing experience and expressed concern about a number of factors influencing the blue crab population, including predation. Mr. Jenkins does not want to re-open the crab dredge fishery. Mike Lightfoot, commercial waterman, pointed out that most of CMAC has dredged before and represent their own interests. He does not feel that the dredge fishery is beneficial on the whole because far more crabbers do not want the crab dredge fishery to re-open.

VI. Closing Remarks

Commissioner Green thanked the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources for being present and thanked CMAC, the public, and staff for their time and input.

VII. Adjourn

Meeting was called to a close at 6:07pm.