

**VIRGINIA SALTWATER FISHING TOURNAMENT
MINUTES FOR THE 2018 TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING**

**2600 Washington Avenue; Fourth Floor, Commission Library
Newport News, VA
November 15, 2018
6:00 pm**

I. Introductions/Announcements

Committee member Claude Bain was unable to attend but provided written comments regarding considerations for modifying the minimum qualifying weight for spadefish, as well as his thoughts on the new language adopted by the Commission regarding measuring fish for regulatory purposes. Copies of the comments were provided to the Committee.

Examples of the “new” Junior Angler Award and Citation certificates were circulated to the Committee. The updated awards have signatures of Governor Northam and Commissioner Bowman but also include Secretary of Natural Resources Strickler.

II. Approval of Minutes from the 2017 Annual Meeting

Draft Minutes from the 2017 Annual meeting were approved as written.

III. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments

IV. Review 2018 Program (excluding spadefish—see item VII)

The Committee reviewed updated graphs using the 2018 preliminary data for each species. Historical charts showing Citation numbers from when the species was added to the program until present for most species. A notable exception is golden tilefish which was added to the list of eligible species in 2015. The graphs reflect

final year-end totals except for 2018. The number in the graph for 2018 is the number Citation applications received and processed as of November 7, 2018.

For some species such as black sea bass, blueline tilefish, tautog, speckled trout and striped bass a majority of the larger fish are registered in November and December and the preliminary data is very incomplete. For others, such as cobia, white marlin, etc. the data should be pretty complete. Species such as bluefish, croaker, flounder and spot the number of Citation fish remained at very low levels. Citation numbers remained steady for several of the popular inshore species, such as cobia and sheepshead while red drum Citations (release only) remained at historic highs. Registered catches of both king and Spanish mackerel were well above average.

Dr. Ken Neill received a request the Tournament consider adding tripletail to the list of eligible species. Several fishermen indicated they had caught or seen more of these in recent years. Tripletail will be on the Committee's agenda as a discussion item, including available background information, for their next annual meeting.

V. Update State Records from 2018

There were no new State record fish registered in 2018.

VI. Citation/State Record Appeals

There were no Citation or State record appeals for 2018.

VII. Continued Discussion of Spadefish Citation Qualifying Criteria

The Committee renewed their discussion of spadefish Citation qualifying criteria using background information requested during last year's annual meeting. Spadefish were first added to the Program in 1995 with a minimum qualifying weight of 9 pounds. The qualifying weight fluctuated between 7 and 9 pounds through 2002, when the weight was set at 9 pounds in response to establish the appropriate weight for a trophy catch. Also in 2002 a release Citation was established at 21 inches but the release minimum was raised to 22 inches in 2004. Both the weight minimum (9 pounds) and release minimum (22 inches) have remained unchanged since. Citation numbers grew to their highest number (992) in 2003. However since 2008 fewer than one hundred spadefish in any one year have met the minimum qualifying criteria. In 2012, 2014 and 2016 no spadefish

meeting the minimum criteria were registered. The Committee considered the impact of lowering the minimum weight by evaluating those years when the weight was set less than 9 pounds (number and percent of fish less than 9 pounds but equal or greater than 8 pounds and number and percent of fish less than 8 pounds but equal or greater than 7 pounds). After considerable discussion the Committee voted unanimously to lower the Citation minimum qualifying weight to 8 pounds but maintain the existing release minimum of 22 inches. They justified their decision recognizing the spadefish stock was largely unfished as this recreational fishery began to develop in the early 1990's, thus an 8-pound Citation weight better reflects a realistic trophy catch.

VIII. Discussion: New Language adopted by the Commission regarding measuring fish for regulatory purposes

Earlier this year Commission adopted "Snout" means the most forward projection from a fish's head that includes the upper and lower jaw and adopted a new standard for determining total length of a fish for regulatory purposes:

"Total length" means the length of a fish measured from the most forward projection of the snout, with the mouth closed, to the tip of the longer lobe of the tail (caudal) fin, measured with the tail compressed along the midline, using a straight-line measure, not measured over the curve of the body.

Tournament Rules describe essentially the same procedure, though "snout" is not included in the definition but the tournament rule definition essentially is the same as snout.

"Measurements for "release" Citations shall be total length measured on a flat measuring device; fish must be laid on top of a measuring stick or tape that has been completely stretched out and is resting on a flat surface and measured from the tip of its nose or lower jaw to the tip of its tail."

The only real difference between the two definitions is the Commission's definition includes compression of the tail while the tournament rule does not specially state compressing the tail but does not preclude this procedure. Compression of the tail could lead to a slight increase in "total length" but for most species of fish there is very little difference in the resulting measurement. After some discussion by the Committee the consensus seemed to be no change was needed and some members felt anglers were already using compression of the tail when it was to their advantage.

IX. The Agency is Moving to Fort Monroe and Some Things Must Go

The Committee was updated on several changes in record keeping for the Tournament. Specifically the “hard copies” of Citation registrations forms. Original copies of the forms were being kept for 5 years. Minimum data elements of Citations are entered into the agency computer system but not all “meta data” is part of the electronic record. Our new location will have less space available for such storage. To conserve space only the prior three years’ worth of Citation forms will be preserved. After three years the older records will be documented and shredded. In addition there are other items (such as approximately 40 years’ worth of Saltwater Sportsman Magazine) that will need to go. Suggestions from the Committee included contacting a Veteran’s home or jailhouse where reading material may be appreciated. The Director will seek out these and other sources, if unsuccessful the magazines will go in the recycle bin.

X. Other Business

There was no other business

XI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 P.M.