

Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Crab Management Advisory Committee (CMAC) Minutes
2600 Washington Avenue, Newport News, VA
VMRC Commission Room, 4TH Floor
Tuesday, Feb 21, 2017 – 4:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present

Ernest George
Mark Sanford
Wayne Morris

VMRC Staff Present

Ryan Jiorle
Joe Cimino
Jill Ramsey
Rob O'Reilly
Alex Aspinwall
Megan Wood
Katie May Laumann
Nancy McElligot

Members Absent

Hon. Lynn Kellum
Hon. Ed Tankard
Kenneth Diggs
Daniel Dise
Johnny Graham
Ken Smith
Kevin Wade
Tom Powers
Donald Porter Sr.
Chris Moore
Viola West
Peter Nixon
Marshall Cox

Others Present

Beverly Ludford
Dan Knott
Lynnee Squires
Charlie Gregory
Scott Wivell
Tim Wivell

Minutes were recorded by Jill Ramsey.

I. Introductions, announcements & approval of minutes

The meeting was called to order at 5:10pm by Rob O'Reilly who sat as the chair of the meeting. Only three committee members were in attendance, no quorum was reached, and minutes from the April 2016 meeting could not be approved. Mr. O'Reilly stated that VMRC will be working with Maryland and Potomac River Fisheries Commission to do an updated stock assessment. This issue will be discussed further at the next meeting.

II. New Business

1. Blue crab harvest update from the 2016 season

Joe Cimino gave a brief review of the 2016 Commercial Blue crab harvest. The 2016 data is still coming in and numbers may go up a bit in the upcoming months. Virginia harvested 26.5 million pounds of hard crabs and 1 million pounds of peelers in 2016. Mr. Cimino discussed the latent effort in the fishery. The Committee was presented with

information showing the number of people eligible for crab gear licenses versus the number of people active in the fishery. Mark Sanford asked staff to look into how many eligible inactive licensees have transferred their licenses to other individuals. The concern is new harvesters that are joining the fishery will increase effort in the upcoming years.

The VMRC price survey shows that the dockside value for blue crab in 2016 looks good and has increased with the increase in harvest. A few Committee members disagreed stating that harvesters were not seeing a good price for their crabs. VMRC staff agreed that we do not get enough economic data to have an accurate picture of dockside value. It is not mandatory for harvesters to give the VMRC economic or price information and only a small percentage reply to the price survey that is sent out by our mandatory reporting department.

2. Initiate a discussion of possible management responses to the late April-early May results of the 2016-17 Bay-wide Winter Crab Dredge Survey.

Mr. Rob O'Reilly stated that the results of the 2016-17 Winter Crab Dredge Survey will be available in the later part of April. In 2014 we had a depleted stock but we are now climbing back up and 2016 was a good year for total crabs and juvenile crabs. The results of the 2015-16 survey showed a solid number of spawning age females and juvenile crabs. After this year's results come out, the Committee will further discuss when it will be appropriate to relax regulations and what adjustments in gear and seasons would be needed.

III. Old Business:

1. Continue discussion on sanctuary areas, including possible changes to the closing dates of Areas 2, 3, and 4 and areas where the sanctuary might be trimmed.

Joe Cimino initiated a discussion on the current Blue Crab sanctuary areas. Mr. Gregory voiced his concern about the Virginia Beach area sanctuary and discussed the issue that Lynnhaven crabbers are crowded into one small area. He would like to see the sanctuary open longer in the spring and open later in the fall. Mr. O'Reilly stated the importance of the spring spawning time and the reason why the dates are set the way they are. Staff's hope is to have a full committee meeting in March and the sanctuaries will be discussed in more detail. Mark Sanford spoke on the sanctuary in the lower bay, he would like staff to supply the Committee with a graph on the distribution of crabs in the Bay by month. Mr. Sanford would like to see the lower area sanctuary dates change from May 6-Sept 25 to June 1-Oct 22. Staff will look into this suggestion for the next meeting.

2. Discussion on the use of agents in the blue crab fishery.

The Committee discussed the positives and negatives of having agents in the fishery. Mr. Ernest George suggested that the cap on agents be reduced every five years.

3. Blue crab commercial license waiting list.

Joe Cimino briefly went over the status of the blue crab commercial waiting list. In 2009 the waiting list was at 837 people (peeler 332) (hard pot 515) while in 2017 there are only

126 people on the hard pot waiting list 97 people on the peeler pot waiting list. The majority of people that have been removed from the waiting list is because they no longer hold a commercial card. There has been a steady decline every year in the number of people on the waiting list.

4. CMAC members input on additional items for this or a following meeting.

Megan Wood gave a brief presentation about derelict crab pots and the use of biodegradable cull ring panels. For the next meeting, staff was requested to show the Committee different options for biodegradable panels. Also, on the request of a Committee member Ms. Wood will make available a map of the derelict pots.

Ms. Wood presented a request from VIMS staff member Hamish Small. Mr. Small is looking for participants for his study on disease in blue crab shed tank operations. He would like to have a round table discussion after the next CMAC meeting.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

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