

**Virginia Recreational Fishing Advisory Board
Virginia Marine Resources Commission
2017 Applicant Presentation Meeting
Monday, May 8, 2017**

Board Members Present

Sheldon Arey
Carolyn Brown
J. T. Holland
Meriwether Payne
Charles Randolph
Ed Rhodes
Charles Southall

Staff Present

Jane McCroskey
Terri Short
Debbie Corker
Lewis Gillingham
Adam Kenyon
Alicia Nelson

Board Members Absent

Randy Pack
Jack Miller

Others Present

Steve Bowman
Carter Williams
Bonnie Fitz
Brian Fuller
Denny Dobbins
Charles Clarkson
Greg Brown
Fred Smith
Fred Chemi
Betty Chemi
Rob Cowling
Mary Fabrizio
Wesley Brown
Jamie Weist
Joe Stephenson
George Reich
Susanna Musick
Michael Anderson
David Anderson
Robert Burstein
Andrew Scheld

Minutes were recorded by Alicia Nelson. An audio recording of the meeting is available.

I. Introduction, Announcements, Comments.

Chairman Rhodes began the meeting by introducing and welcoming former Commissioner Steve Bowman. Alicia Nelson welcomed Meriwether Payne, who was newly appointed to the RFAB. Ms. Payne briefly described her background and fishing interests.

II. Status of Fund.

Jane McCroskey provided an update on the VSRFDF. She noted the budget cuts that came from the 2017 Virginia Assembly Session that increased the agency obligations on the fund to roughly \$2.1 million annually. She said that approximately \$456,000 is currently projected to be available for project. She noted that the estimate was based on projected sales through June of 2017 and after taking out all of the agency obligations through the fiscal year.

She said that there was a lot of impact based on what was introduced in the Governor's budget and the following changes in the legislature. She noted that the Governor's budget included ending the Virginia Saltwater Tournament, but that during the legislative session, the tournament and the two positions were returned; however, the funding will still come from the VSRFDF.

Other impacts included other unobligated funds from both the commercial and recreational license funds, a reduction in the American eel project, and reduction or discontinuation of several programs such as the call-in portion for the Fisherman Identification Program. All of the reductions replace lost general funds in the agency's budget (primarily law enforcement).

She noted that the license sales are projected at \$2.4 million annually. Agency obligations are approximately \$2.1 million annually, before accounting for the funding required for the Sportfish Restoration match that is being presented at this meeting. Obligations have increased dramatically as a result of actions at the legislature.

Ms. McCroskey offered copies of the budget and amendments to the board and public. She also noted that there would be a new report required in 2017 of how the license funds are used annually.

Mr. Randolph asked Ms. McCroskey to review what funding would be left after the agency obligations. Ms. McCroskey said that \$2.4 million are projected in license sales annually, and that \$2.1 million in agency obligations are removed annually. The sportfish restoration match is typically \$300,000 annually as well. She said that right now, \$456,000 is available for projects, and that updated projects should be available by the next meeting.

Mr. Southall summarized that with the \$450,000 available this year, and the future obligations on the fund, that it would be inappropriate to expect that amount of funding in discretionary funds in future years. There would not be any available funding in future years.

Ms. McCroskey noted that there may be some funding that is returned from projects annually, but that it is very difficult to project. She also noted that due to language in the appropriation act, the agency is not allowed currently to raise the price of recreational fishing licenses to generate additional revenue at this time.

Mr. Southall wanted to stress to everyone that based on the best available projects, there doesn't appear to be a reliable source of discretionary funding moving forward.

III. Review of Minutes from the November 2016 RFAB Meeting.

Mr. Holland motioned to approve the minutes from the November 2016 RFAB meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Randolph. The motion was approved unanimously.

IV. Fishing event applications for 2018 events:

A) 2018 Knights of Columbus Annual Kids Fishing Day (Year 30). Greg Brown, **\$7,500.**

Mr. Brown presented information about the annual Kid's Fishing Day held by the Knights of Columbus. He noted that in 2016, they worked with over 600 children. All children get lunch, a t-shirt, and a fishing pole, along with a day of fishing.

Mr. Southall asked if he could give an estimate of how many children had been served by his program, and Mr. Brown estimated at least 3,600 children combined with the adults and chaperones that came yearly.

- B) 2018 Hope House & Oak Grove Nursing Home Fishing Excursions and Clinics. Joseph Stephenson; George Reich, Great Bridge Fisherman's Association. **\$3,825.**

Joe Stephenson presented the GBFA's fishing projects planned for 2018. He showed pictures of both the boat and pier outings that are held annually, and he invited the board to any of the trips.

- C) 2018 Saxis and Morley's Wharf Children's Fishing and Conservation Educational Outings. Fred Chemi, Eastern Shore of Virginia Anglers Club. **\$2,100.**

Fred Chemi presented for the ESVAC. He described two events held annually at Morley's Wharf and Saxis Fishing Pier on the Eastern Shore. On average 116 children from 3 to 15 years old are part of the fishing events.

- D) 2018 Virginia Beach Anglers Club/Seton Youth Shelter Children's Fishing Trip. Robert Burstein, Virginia Beach Anglers Club. **\$2,500.**

Bob Burstein from the VBAC presented the project, noting that due to the rules from the Seton Youth Shelter, photographs are not allowed. He noted that providing rods and reels to the children from the youth shelter has been very important because the children rarely get things that are their own. The program has proven very successful.

- E) 2018 Norfolk Youth Head Boat Fishing Trip. James "Ike" Eisenhower, Norfolk Anglers Club. **\$1,200.**

Ned Smith presented the project for the Norfolk Anglers Club. He said that they take children for a ½ day fishing trip followed by a picnic.

- F) 2018 Children's Fishing Clinic. Rob Cowling, Newport News Rotary Club and Coastal Conservation Association-Peninsula. **\$7,500.**

Items F and G were presented together. Mr. Cowling and Mr. Brown described their concurrent events in Newport News and Hampton for the Children's Fishing Clinics. The events are scheduled for July 22nd at the James River Fishing Pier and July 25th at the Buckroe Fishing Pier in 2017. They noted that approximately 500 children are part of the clinics.

- G) 2018 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic. Wesley Brown, Capital District Kiwanis Club. **\$7,500.**

Item G was presented with item F (above).

- H) 2018 Sunshine Children's Fishing Program. Denny Dobbins, Portsmouth Anglers Club/Sunshine Program. **\$9,905.**

Mr. Dobbins presented the project, and the board asked to change the request to \$9,900 even. For 2016, 504 children were part of the project, and it has expanded in recent years. He said that the goal of the program was to teach children to fish. He invited the board members to attend the trips every Thursday.

Mr. Rhodes noted that all of the fishing events presented were for 2018. He asked the applicants to remember that the shortfalls described would likely affect the fishing clubs for their 2019 projects.

V. Access Projects

- I) Wormley Creek Waterfront Improvements. Bonnie Fitz, York County. **\$240,082.**

Ms. Bonnie Fitz gave a presentation about Wormley Creek and the planned improvements to the fishing pier, kayak launch, and parking lot. She noted that York County has limited public access, but that this location provided the only direct access to the York River due to a lack of dredging at a nearby site. She noted that match funding was available as part of a capital improvement project.

The existing site has safety concerns (lacking a hand rail), is not handicap accessible, and requires updates. She described that the planned kayak launch would be handicap accessible as well. She noted that the county had already completed some of the improvements listed on the site plan (the boat ramp improvements).

Mr. Rhodes asked if the county had spoken with Phil Lownes about the project, and they replied that they had spoken with DGIF.

Mr. Southall asked what would happen if the project wasn't funded, and Ms. Fitz responded that they would continue to look for funding elsewhere.

Mr. Arey asked who built the pier initially, and Ms. Fitz said that her understanding was that it was built in the 1970's and turned over to the County.

Mr. Southall said that it would be helpful to have a breakdown of costs and a prioritized list so that in future meetings, there would be options for partial funding.

- J) Clontz Park Boat Ramp-Additional Funding Request. Peter Stephenson, Town of Smithfield. **\$393,185.**

Jamie Weist, from Kimley Horn updated the board on the project and thanked the board for the funding recommendation for the prior request. He noted that the original estimate was done before the hydrographic survey had been completed. Due to the amount of fill needed at the site, the bids received in October 2016 ranged from \$500,000 to over one million. The bidders noted that the most expensive portions of the bids were the coffer dam required at the site.

The town has looked at other construction methods and spoken with VDGIF to try to find more cost effective methods, but was unable to find a solution. They do believe that

the bid prices are high and are planning to rebid the project, but wanted to come back during this cycle to ask for additional funds during the 2017 cycle.

Carter Williams, mayor of the Town of Smithfield, also spoke about the need for a boat ramp in the area.

Steve Bowman, Chief of Police for the Town of Smithfield, and former Commissioner, commented that a boat ramp was needed in the area. The closest site is the Jones Creek ramp which can be shallow and serves as overflow for the ramp at the James River Bridge. Mr. Bowman said that he understood that boating access projects were very expensive but that the town is working hard to obtain whatever funds that they can and asked that the board provide what they could toward the project.

Mr. Holland asked if the town or county could provide funds and asked that the project go back for bid again.

Mr. Randolph clarified what was required for a coffer dam (channeling the water in order to have an undisturbed area to complete the construction). He asked if there was another area to put a ramp in the vicinity that would not require the coffer dam. Mr. Bowman said that there were very few buildable lots on Cyprus Creek or the Pagan River, due to the amount of private property, wetlands, and residences.

The board also asked if the VDGIF could provide funding, and the town representatives said that they had explored the localities programs with other agencies as well.

VI. Research Projects

K) Marine Sportfish Collection Project, Year 11, Adam Kenyon, VMRC. **\$12,000.**

Adam Kenyon presented the request for the next segment of funding for the Marine Sportfish Collection Project. He noted that funding has not been required annually, and that staff has tried to stretch the funds as far as possible. He also described how much more cost effective samples were (approximately \$10 per sample) compared to purchasing a fish to sample commercially. The largest expenses for the program are replacement freezers (in addition to t-shirts and shipping costs).

Mr. Arey asked if there was a minimum size for samples, and Mr. Kenyon replied that there are minimum sizes on some (mostly for fish that are easy to access commercially). Mr. Arey was surprised at the lack of speckled trout listed at some locations, and Mr. Kenyon described some of the donations were local pickups.

L) Virginia Game Fish Tagging (Year 25). S. Musick (VIMS), L. Gillingham (VMRC). **\$82,971.**

Susanna Musick presented the plans for the next segment Game Fish Tagging Program. She presented a summary snapshot of the tagging program report from last year that will be available in the next few months. She noted that over 16,000 fish were tagged last year. She also described the benefits of the program beyond that annual report that includes outreach to fishing events other children's education that occurs annually.

Mr. Southall noted how important the outreach component of the project was to the fishing community.

Mr. Rhodes mentioned the need for a more proactive fishing community with the legislature.

- M) *Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-Year American Eel in the Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay (Yr 15). M. Fabrizio, T. Tuckey, VIMS. \$46,960. (**\$22,650 from VSRFDF, and \$22,650 from MFIF**)

Dr. Fabrizio presented the annual young-of-year American Eel Survey. She noted that the addendum for the Fisheries Management Plan for American Eel included a provision to continue current monitoring for American eel. Young-of-year are measured to look for recruitment failures in the fishery.

Dr. Fabrizio gave a brief overview of the survey and data provided by site annually and described how abundance and recruitment is different based on sampling site. She also noted that these data are being used for the updated stock assessment for American eel.

- N) Federal Assistance (Sportfish Restoration) Matching Funds, Federal FY 2018. R. O'Reilly, VMRC. **\$236,828.**

Alicia Nelson presented the project for matching funds for the upcoming Sportfish Restoration projects. She noted that for every dollar spent, it is used as match for three dollars of federal funding. Most of the funding goes toward monitoring and assessment projects completed by VIMS and ODU. She described the data provided and the match funding from the Sportfish Restoration projects, and that staff is actively working with the other agencies to reduce costs and match requirements.

- O) Quantifying the Economic and Behavioral Effects of Alternative Regulatory Measures in Virginia's Recreational Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) Fishery (Year 2). Andrew Scheld, VIMS. **\$44,864.**

Andrew Scheld described the current, ongoing cobia economic project and what was planned for year two. He went over the data needs moving forward. A stakeholder meeting was held in January, and they are currently working with focus groups to move forward with the survey. Data from all of these sources will be used to develop the economic models.

Dr. Scheld noted that they had found some cost savings during the first segment involving software currently licensed at VIMS that may lower the costs of year one (which is ongoing).

Mr. Arey commented that this project may be of interest to the South Atlantic Council as well.

Mr. Southall asked how the survey was being distributed and if it would be distributed at the cobia bowl in June, and Dr. Scheld said that the survey may not be ready at that time, but that VIMS staff would be present at the tournament.

VII. Tentative Dates for Future RFAB meetings:

Mr. Rhodes noted that the next meeting would be on July 10th, followed by a public hearing on September 11th. Mr. Randolph asked about a work session for the July 10th meeting, and Mr. Southall asked for an update on budgeting and license sales. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.