

FINAL MINUTES
Recreational Fishing Advisory Board Meeting
July 14, 2008

Members Present

Edward Rhodes - Vice-chairman
Carlisle Bannister
John Barr
Carolyn Brown

Jim Deibler
Jesse "Jimmie" Duell
Charles Randolph

Members Not Present

George Hudgins - Chairman
Charles Southall

A special RFAB Guidelines Work Session was held from 5:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. These minutes are from the Presentations Meeting (7:00 p.m.) of this project cycle.

At 7:10 p.m., Vice-chairman Rhodes called the meeting to order.

Ms. Jane McCroskey informed everyone that the revenue available for projects is estimated as \$646,540, as of September 30, 2008. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) has not billed the VMRC for the last three years of administrative services for the sale of saltwater licenses, totaling \$120,000. The monies that were set aside for payment of these services to the DGIF have been released back into the recreational fund. At this time, Ms. McCroskey does not know if the DGIF will bill us, in the future, for past services. If payments are made, the recreational fund report will be modified, accordingly.

Mr. Rhodes asked for a review of the draft May 12, 2008 RFAB meeting minutes. Mr. Barr made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Bannister seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to accept the draft minutes as final.

Multi-Year Projects for Renewal.

- A) 2009 Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 12). Rob Cowling, Newport News Rotary Club and Coastal Conservation Association-Peninsula. **\$6,000.** Mr. Cowling summarized his proposal. He pointed out that this would be the 13th year of the clinic, but the 12th year of saltwater license funding. He invited the Board members to attend the 2008 clinic on Saturday, July 19. Mr. Brown (Item B) invited the Board members to attend the Kiwanis 2008 clinic on Tuesday, July 22. Mr. Cowling and Mr. Brown work together and buy in bulk to keep costs down for these two clinics. Mr. Cowling and Mr. Brown have been able to keep their saltwater license fund requests each year at \$6,000 because of the contributions of all the partners involved.
- B) 2009 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 8). Wesley Brown, Capital District Kiwanis Club. **\$6,000.** See Item A.
- C) Federal Assistance (Wallop-Breaux) Matching Funds FY 2009. Jack Travelstead, VMRC. **\$321,820.** Mr. Travelstead let everyone know that the amount of federal money that we receive continues to increase every year, but he does not know how much longer

that trend will continue. The Wallop-Breaux fund is collected through an excise tax on boats, motors, tackle, etc. With the increase of federal money, nearly \$2.7 million, the state match must also increase. VIMS and ODU will also provide some of the state match. With the reduced amount of commercial funds collected this year and the commitment to fund some continuation projects, there are no commercial funds available to assist in providing the state match. Projects to be funded, by Wallop-Breaux funds, include the shad and striped bass monitoring (adults & juveniles), finfish ageing, ChesMMAP, and the juvenile trawl survey. Should other sources of funding become available for the ChesMMAP and trawl survey, the Wallop-Breaux funds could be used for other projects, such as artificial reefs. Ms. Brown commented that it would have been nice if the commercial fund would have provided at least a small amount for state match.

- D) Improving Stock Assessment of Weakfish (*Cynoscion regalis*) – Year 2. Y. Jiao, D. Orth, VPI & SU, and R. O'Reilly, VMRC. **\$130,876**. Mr. O'Reilly explained that Yan was attending a 3-day Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) weakfish data workshop. Introducing Yan into the ASMFC process was one of the items discussed with the first year of the project. At this workshop, they will assemble all the coastwide weakfish fishery dependent and independent data, and provide it to Yan. Mr. O'Reilly continued with a Power Point presentation showing the downward trend of the weakfish stock, and a summarization of the first 6 months of the project. Currently, there is no peer reviewed stock assessment for weakfish. Yan's project (3 years) is one of three prongs for establishing a usable stock assessment. Some effort has been made to find other funding sources. NOAA, Chesapeake Bay Office has said that they do not have money to put towards this work. A proposal, due in October, will be submitted to the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund (license plate fund). However, it is not a high volume grant amount type of fund, and only a small amount is expected, if any. A proposal to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has recently been submitted. A request was submitted to the ASMFC, and Mr. Bob Beal has indicated that the ASMFC will contribute a small amount, somewhere around \$5,000 to \$8,000, to the project.
- E) 2009 Virginia Game Fish Tagging (Year 15). J. Lucy, VIMS and L. Gillingham, VMRC. **\$86,698**. Mr. Lucy explained that the tagging database has been improved by moving it to a more stable, web-based system. He thanked Todd Sperling of VMRC for all the work he did to move the data to the new system and improving the whole process. With the new system, some of the taggers may be able to assist staff with the keying of the tagging data. Mr. Lucy presented a Power Point presentation summarizing previous years of the VGFT program. He explained some of the problems with tagging speckled trout and informed everyone of the new tagging program that North Carolina is trying with speckled trout. About 15% of the VA tagged speckled trout are captured in NC, and he expects fish tagged in NC will be captured in VA. Mr. Lucy also mentioned the low recapture rate, 2% to 3%, of adult red drum with the standard dart tag. This low recapture rate on adult red drum is one reason the pop-up satellite tag study (Item G) is being proposed. Mr. Lucy also showed the tagging effort and recapture rates of some of the species. In 2007, flounder accounted for approximately 46%, red drum for about 16%, speckled trout for about 13%, and the other 7 species accounted for the other 25% of the fish that were tagged. The program utilizes around 200 anglers to tag fish, annually, and the majority of these anglers have participated in the program for many years. The result is an increase in the numbers of tagged fish and an improvement in the quality of data on those tagged fish. The number of tagged fish also correlates to the

increased number of recaptures. Mr. Lewis Gillingham showed samples of the rewards for recaptures, they are currently using for the program. Mr. Gillingham mentioned that his part of the budget increased for 2009, mainly because of increased shipping costs.

New Projects.

- F) Migrations of Adult Summer Flounder from Chesapeake Bay: Implications for Stock Structure. M. Fabrizio, M. Henderson, VIMS. **\$83,605**. Mr. Mark Henderson showed a Power Point presentation reviewing some of the data collected from an acoustic telemetry study on summer flounder, previously funded by the recreational fund. Mr. Henderson pointed out that both large and small flounder were more active during the slack tide that occurs before flood tide. The limitation of the acoustic receivers is that once the fish moves outside the receiving area, they cannot track the movements. In the current proposal, Mr. Henderson plans to use surgically implanted data storage tags. These tags are similar in size and shape to the tags used in the acoustic telemetry study; however, these tags are not limited to a particular receiving area. Once the data storage tag is implanted into a fish, the tag continuously collects temperature and depth data. Once the fish is recaptured, the information may be used to track the movements of the fish. The information may also be used to create a picture of the stock structure. The plan is to tag 200 Chesapeake Bay summer flounder with the data storage tags. The 4 proposed tagging locations are Back River Reef, Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel, Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, and around Buoy 36A near Kiptopeke. The flounder will be caught using hook-and-line or small trawl net. They also plan to collaborate with the ChesMMAW trawl survey to tag summer flounder captured in other locations throughout the Virginia portion of the Bay. The fish and data storage tags need to be recovered to be able to download the data. To encourage the return of the fish with the tag, they will offer a \$200 reward for each return. Once the tags are returned, they will be able to analyze the data. Some expected benefits of the study are to be able to determine the timing of the migration patterns into and out of the Bay, estimate the proportion of flounder that may remain in the Bay throughout the winter, and perhaps the size of flounder remaining in the Bay throughout the winter, the migration spawning routes these fish are taking to the Continental Shelf, and characteristics of the habitat that these fish are occupying. The tags record data for 2 years and retain the data for up to 10 years. With the reward offered, they expect about a 15% recapture and return rate. For advertisement about this tagging study, they plan to visit local anglers clubs, post posters at marinas and various fishing locations, provide information to VGFT participants, and radio. Fish with the data storage tag, surgically implanted in the belly, will also have an external T-bar tag with contact information and advertising the reward. Because of the implant, the smallest flounder that can be tagged is about 12 inches. The plan is to tag adult summer flounder in a wide range of sizes. VIMS will have to apply for a special exemption to allow fishermen to capture and return undersized flounder with these special data storage tags. To make sure fishermen do not damage the data storage tags, VIMS will have to request that the whole carcass be returned. Dr. Fabrizio has some other funds to purchase additional tags and provide additional reward money, if necessary. A suggestion was made to also notify the commercial fishery about the tagged fish.
- G) Use of Pop-Up Satellite Archival Tags (PSATs) to Determine the Fate, Movements, and Habitat Utilization of Red Drum Released from Virginia's Recreational Fishery. J. Graves, A. Horodysky, J. Lucy, VIMS. **\$93,569**. Dr. John Graves provided a Power

Point presentation. He showed some of the problems with the current red drum tagging and the low recapture rates (2-3%). North Carolina has also seen similar low recapture rates for tagged adult red drum. The researchers are not sure why the recapture rates are so low. One reason could be a high post-release mortality. A second reason could be that the fish have discovered a way to shed the tag. The pop-up satellite archival tags (PSATs) are attached to the fish and collect temperature, pressure, and light level data as the fish travels through the water column. The PSATs record the data every few minutes, and the tags detach from the fish at pre-programmed length of time. After detaching from the fish, the PSATs float to the surface and transmit the majority of the data through the Argos satellite system for 30 days. Once a PSAT is recovered, 100% of the data may be retrieved. The goal is to recover all PSATs, if possible, because of the additional data retrieval, and the tags may be refurbished at a lesser cost and reused. The cost is \$800 to refurbish a PSAT and \$4,000 to purchase a new one. Dr. Graves presented some of the data collected from the pilot study on striped bass with the smaller sized PSATs. The pilot study has shown that these tags will work well for near shore schooling fish. The strategy for this study is to deploy 15 PSATs on adult red drum. Five of the tags will be pre-programmed to detach from the fish in 30 days, another 5 in 90 days, and the last 5 in 180 days. The idea is to deploy all 15 fish around the same time (late May / early June) somewhere near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel. A reward of \$100 and a T-shirt is offered to encourage the return of the PSATs. The researchers plan to fish with knowledgeable, volunteer, recreational anglers to catch the adult red drum with hook-and-line, and supplement the angler by paying for the fuel for the trip.

- H) Seasonal Caloric Needs and Energy Intake of Chesapeake Bay's Predatory Fishes: Which Prey Fuel Growth and Reproduction? A. Horodysky, R. Latour, VIMS. **\$40,060.** Mr. Andriy Horodysky presented a Power Point presentation. He first provided an overview of the lifecycle of a fish. During the egg stage, the yolk from the egg provides the food source. Prey availability during the larvae stage is critical for recruitment; otherwise, a high natural mortality occurs. As the fish moves into the juvenile stage, the prey availability becomes important for growth and development. As the fish continues to the adult stage, the prey needs change to support growth and maturation. During all the development stages, the food and energy sources need to outweigh natural mortality. As an adult, the growth rate slows down and the energy is shifted to reproduction. The food source must be good quality for the fish to produce high quality and quantity of eggs. Approximately 60% of the food energy goes to normal body functions to survive, such as organ function, metabolism, and so forth. Approximately 20% of food is not absorbed and the body uses additional energy to excrete it. The remaining 20% is used for growth and reproduction. This shows the importance of eating high quality foods for the ability to grow and reproduce. The question for fish is how much energy expenditure is needed to locate, catch, eat, and excrete this high quality food? As the high quality foods, such as menhaden, become more difficult to find, will lower quality foods, such as amphipods, produce the same growth and reproduction? The difference between the various foods types is not fully understood for fishes in the Chesapeake Bay. Also, the quantities required differ from one food type to another, and the availability of prey changes in location, time of year, and age of the fish. The vision studies have shown that over time the water clarity in the Chesapeake Bay has changed, and the prey is more difficult to locate for visual feeding fishes. Mr. Horodysky explained that the researchers do not know how water clarity will affect the predator sportfish over time. This study proposes to ascertain the seasonal caloric values of various common sportfish preys. In

conjunction with other studies, they plan to determine the energy consumptions necessary for striped bass, summer flounder, weakfish, spotted seatrout, and red drum. Also, they plan to determine which prey will best meet the needs of the various predator fishes.

Budget and Work Objective Modifications for Two Proposals Reviewed during the Previous RFAB Review Cycle.

- I) Performance of Artificial Fish Reef Types: Concrete Modules, Reef Ball and Materials-of-Opportunity Reefs. Rom Lipcius, VIMS. **\$68,024.** J) Habitat Suitability for Artificial Recreational Fish Reefs. Rochelle Seitz, VIMS. **\$44,244.** Mr. Jacques van Montfrans explained that Rom and Rochelle were out of town, and he would be presenting the information and proposal changes for both Items I and J. The budget for Item I was reduced by 56% from the original request. The request for a ROV camera system was removed from the proposal and substituted with a dissolved oxygen (DO) meter. This change was so they could continue with the monitoring of the two reef sites (Northern Neck and Poquoson). They have also decided to utilize fish pots to capture fish, rather than the other gear types listed in the original proposal. Fish pots are a more cost effective way to capture and identify the fish population structures on these reefs. Spatial scales are important issues to consider, when establishing a reef site. The materials-of-opportunity and reef balls on the reefs do not seem to be meeting the needs of larger fishes. The designed reef structure in the proposal have been designed to provide a refuge for some of the smaller fish and accommodate the larger fish that come to feed on the structure. The greater the habitat complexity of these reefs, the higher the probability that you will have a higher diversity fish community and a higher abundance associated with those reefs. Mr. van Montfrans continued to provide information collected from the current study on the Northern Neck and Poquoson reef sites. The intent of this proposal is to find areas on the reef sites that would be the most productive year-round, and determine the types of structure that would best suite those areas. The DO meter that they are currently using was borrowed from another program. Since the sampling is performed a couple of times a season, they feel it would be best to purchase a DO meter for this project. Mr. van Montfrans believed that the original plan was to do 2 years of study. The first requested amount was to fund the first year, and this request is to fund and complete the second year. For the same reasons these projects were denied in the last review cycle, Mr. Barr made a motion to deny the funding for both Items I and J and was seconded by Mr. Deibler. The vote passed 7-0.

One added Agenda item from the 5:30 p.m. Work Session

Mr. Rhodes asked Ms. Carolyn Brown to be chairman of an education and outreach subcommittee. Mr. Rhodes also added Mr. Charles Southall, Mr. Bob Pride, Mr. Rob Cowling, and Ms. Sonya Davis to participate in the discussions.

The next Second Cycle of RFAB meetings are scheduled for September 8 and November 10.

Vice-chairman Rhodes adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Note: Audio files of the meeting are available at <http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/vsrfd/index.shtm> (Choose, Current Proposals, on the left-hand menu)