FINAL MINUTES
Recreational Fishing Advisory Board Meeting
November 14, 2005

Members Present

George Hudgins - Chairman
Edward Rhodes - Vice-chair
Carlisle Bannister
John Barr
Carolyn Brown

Jim Deibler
Jimmie Duell
Charles Randolph
Charles Southall

RFAB Work Session – 5:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. The minutes are from the Final Meeting.

At 7:15 p.m., Chairman Hudgins called the meeting to order. Mr. Hudgins asked if staff had any additional announcements or comments.

Jane McCroskey said the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) transferred $1.4 million to the fund, a week or so ago. On the financial report, that would increase the amount available for projects to almost $900,000. We hope to receive another $200,000 before the January meeting.

Mr. Hudgins asked for a review of the draft September 12, 2005 RFAB meeting minutes. Mr. Rhodes made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Brown seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to accept the draft minutes as final.

Mr. Bannister made a motion to review Renewal Items A through F all at one time. Mr. Randolph seconded the motion.

Multi-Year Projects for Renewal

A. 2005 Saxis Fishing Pier Youth Fishing Tournament (Year 4) $1,500.
B. 2005 Morley's Wharf Youth Fishing Tournament (Year 4) $1,500.
C. 2006 Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 9) $6,000.
D. 2006 Virginia Game Fish Tagging (Year 12) $60,823.
E. Artificial Fishing Reef Structure Acquisition and Deployment $200,000.
F. 2006 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 5) $6,000.

A motion was made to approve Items A through F and was seconded. The vote was unanimous to fully fund items A through F.

New Projects

G. Sheepshead Population Dynamics in Chesapeake Bay, Virginia (Year 1) $64,545.
   Eric Robillard (Head of Plans & Statistics, VMRC – previously with ODURF) was available to answer any questions on this project. Mr. Barr asked if this project was to be used for the regulatory process or to be used in the future for the
status of the stocks. Eric answered that the intent of this study was to help to
determine what regulations may be necessary for sheepshead. Mr. Barr then
asked, if a regulation was set before the study was completed, would a different
study or modified study be better to monitor the effects of the regulation. Eric
cautions that regulations should not be put in place until we had some science to
support it. Eric continued to say that if a regulation is put in place before the
study, the study could show that it is not enough or too much. Mr. Bannister
asked if Eric could comment on the availability of sheepshead to the entire Bay.
Mr. Bannister indicated that in his area (upper Chesapeake Bay & rivers) they do
not catch sheepshead, and it is mainly a lower Bay fishery. Eric indicated that we
really do not know a lot about this species and the distribution around the Bay,
and the first year of the study would help to answer that question. Mr. Deibler
asked if they have picked up any samples thus far in 2005. Eric reminded him
that he was now with VMRC, and he did not really know the exact number of
samples collected for this year. Mr. Deibler then asked if the samples only came
from the lower Bay would that give a picture of what was going on in the entire
Bay. Eric indicated that it was a fair assumption that we have one stock of
sheepshead, and that samples taken from one area could be used to show the
status of the entire Bay. Mr. Randolph asked if we knew whether or not the
Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel was mainly the northern range of the stock. Eric
indicated that we really do not know at this point. Ms. Brown asked if the study
was valid, if the samples came from the same area and are in the same size range.
Eric mentioned that they had spoken to commercial fishermen, who have seen the
little ones in pound nets, and they plan to use those samples to get a broader size
range. Also, if they can get samples from a few areas in all the size ranges and
make the assumption that it is one stock of fish, the study would be valid for the
Chesapeake Bay only. Mr. Deibler asked if they could save some money on
research that may have already been done around North Carolina. Eric was not
aware of any research that has been done. Mr. Duell asked if we would gain any
information for regulation in 1 year or would they need to wait the entire 3 years.
Eric said that statistically they needed the 3 years, but 1 year would give us an
approximation. A very good year or a very bad year next year could skew the
results and that is another reason they would want the 3 year study. The
researchers would bring this situation to the Board’s attention. Mr. Southall asked
if 3 years had statistical importance or was it just a good average number. Eric
said that more years is always better, but in three years you could get an average
of good and bad years. The scientific community feels that 3 years is probable for
funding and statistically sound. Mr. Randolph asked if he had inquired as to
whether or not any studies are going on in surrounding states. Eric indicated that
as far as they knew no one was collecting these fish. Ms. Brown pointed out that
the project said the results would be compared to studies done in the South
Atlantic Bight, and asked if that information was available already. Eric said that
it was being done in the South Atlantic Bight, specifically Florida, and that stock
assessment information was very important for comparison with this study. Ms.
Brown also asked if 50 pound boxes were available from the commercial sector
from several locations. Eric had heard they were available, from the VMRC
Stock Assessment Technicians, mainly from pound netters. The first year would
be very important, and if they cannot sample the fish, they would not continue
with the following years of the study. Right now they are set up with the contacts and the people in place to get the samples from the commercial and recreational fishermen. Mr. Rhodes asked about the project time-line, which indicated that some of the work would begin in 2005. Eric indicated that a master’s student has been hired and contacts with commercial and recreational fishermen have been completed. Eric knew they had a few sheepshead, but he did not have exact numbers. Eric also indicated that if this project was not approved that the master’s student would move to another project. A motioned was made prior to discussion and seconded to table the project for futures meetings and passed with a vote of 8-1.

H. Wallop-Breaux Matching Funds $261,583.
Mr. Barr commented that this needed to be funded, to obtain the federal funds, even though the recreational side feels they are doing more than their fair share. There is no more money from the commercial side for this year, so the recreational fund must be used. He hopes, with the increase in fees, the commercial side will come up with an equitable share next year. He also made a motion to fund this project and was seconded. The vote passed 8-1.

I. Administration of the Recreational Saltwater Boat Decals $10,000.
Mr. Southall wanted to go on record with commending Jane for all her hard work with the Game Department. Mr. Barr explained to those in attendance. The amount is only to cover the funds expended until the Game Department takes it back over. The vote was unanimous to fund this project for the amended amount of $10,000.

J. Withdrawn

K. 2005 Artificial Fishing Reef Pocket Location Guides $50,000.
The vote was unanimous to not fund this project. (In the Work Session, RFAB was informed that this information would remain in the Anglers Guide and on the Internet. The budget is limited, and RFAB did not want to duplicate effort.)

L. Undercover Law Enforcement Funds for Covert Fisheries Operations $25,000.
The vote was unanimous to fund this project. (In the Work Session, Mr. Barr mentioned that he hoped commercial funds would be used in the future to help support this effort. Also, RFAB commended the accomplishments of this team.)

One additional item was added to the Agenda. York County has requested to amend their budget of the original grant request ($701,000). The County is asking for items not included in the original budget. However, the County still approximates a $66,000 return to the fund even with the new items. A motioned was made to approve the amendments and was seconded. The vote was unanimous to approve the budget amendments.

The Board reviewed the tentative dates for the 2006 meetings. They are as follows:
Mr. Deibler indicated that he would not be able to attend the January meeting.

Mr. Rhodes asked about the maintenance of saltwater sites, such as a grant request from the RFAB. Some members indicated they wanted the Game Department to come before the Board like any other project. Normally, a contract is setup with someone to be responsible for the work, like the Game Department. It would not be appropriate for the RFAB to submit a proposal that they would vote on. Jack Travelstead indicated that he expected to receive a Game Department proposal in December.

Mr. Hudgins adjourned the meeting at 8:47 p.m.