

Virginia Saltwater Development Fund Evaluation of a Proposal for the Development of a Research or Data Collection Project

Project Number: 0412-20

Date: 5 July 2012

Title: T) Fish Away from Whales Angler Outreach Project (Year 1 of 2).

“The Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund is to be used solely for the purpose of conserving and enhancing finfish taken by recreational anglers, enforcing laws related to natural resource conservation, improving recreational fishing opportunities, obtaining necessary data and conducting research for fisheries management, and creating or restoring habitat for species taken by recreational fishermen.”

Code of Virginia, Section 28.2-302.3

NOTE: Please read the entire scoresheet before beginning, then provide comments, and circle () the appropriate score for each item. Thank You.

A. Problem Description and Resolution (20 points)

1. Comment on the adequacy of the problem description, background information, knowledge of available literature/data sources, and anticipated benefits.

I think more information on how the Northeast region has approached outreach to anglers in the last ten years would have been useful. How was success or failure been measured in the Northeast? The potential role the NOAA Protected Resources generally plays in outreach should have been part of the presentation as well as the NOAA's assets to the problem (i.e. what is available from them in terms of materials).

A more complete perspective of how 2011 Dec through 2012 March differed from prior years in terms total number of large whales in the nearshore waters of Virginia Beach. Bluefin tuna well in excess of 100 pounds were readily available from late December and through most of February often less than 3 miles from Rudee Inlet that is unprecedented. Last year really was an anomalous year in terms of large whales for inshore Virginia Beach and therefore the potential for interaction. Many years even the whale watching trips never spot a whale.

2. Describe your views on the conceptual approach to solve the problem.

The project described involves two steps, first education and outreach to anglers, and second, monitoring/enforcement. The education/outreach regarding large whales portion of the project can certainly be justified, as many anglers have never seen a whale before and hardly know what to look for to avoid. It seems to me the monitoring portion of the project could only be justified if an equal number of whales were known to show up in the following year.

SCORE (Circle one)	Poor			Excellent	
	0	5	(10)	15	20

B. Soundness of Project Design/Technical Approach (25 points)

1. Is there sufficient information to technically evaluate the proposal?

Yes, I believe there is, although the exact criteria in use during the monitoring phase could use more detail.

2. What are the strengths/weaknesses of the project design (thoroughness, practicality, methods, integration with other work, etc.)?

The strength of this request is the outreach/education portion of the project, as many anglers have never been in the presence of a live whale. The development of a Mid-Atlantic edition of education/outreach material based upon a similar campaign in the Northeast is a solid approach. The NOAA Protected Resources has a wealth of existing materials that should be easily adapted to the Mid-Atlantic Region. The VA Aquarium & Science Center also has file material that could easily and cost effectively in this production. Cost of producing the material for printing should be minimal and require very little staff time. Copies should be able to be produced for a few pennies each. I believe there are a number of very cost effective means of distribution available that should be considered rather direct mail by staff. First the NOAA partners also administer the HMS permit, also known as the Tuna permit, regardless of how vessel owners register, the Mid-Atlantic outreach material could be added to the letter when the hard copy permit is mailed out at very little to no cost. In Virginia, owners of boat trailers generally renew their trailer decal yearly, another opportunity to provide education/outreach material at little or no cost. Boat registration is done every three years; again education/outreach material could be added to the letter. Lastly, many resident boat owners that saltwater fish purchase a license to cover everyone fishing on the vessel. In many cases decals are mailed by the VA DGIF and education/outreach material could be included at little additional cost.

SCORE (Circle One)	Poor					Excellent
	0	5	10	(15)	20	25

C. Project Management and Experience/Qualifications of Personnel (15 points)

What is your opinion of the experience and capabilities of the Principal Investigator(s) to manage and conduct the work, the availability of facilities, and education and experience of assisting personnel.

Excellent P.I. and supporting staff, topnotch facilities and logistically an ideal location (can literally work right off their back door step).

SCORE (Circle one)	Poor			Excellent
	0	5	10	(15)

D. Project costs (15 points)

Is the budget realistic and reasonable? Indicate any unreasonable costs.

I think the education and outreach portion of the budget could be very realistic but it is not broken down in such a manner to make that determination.

I think the monitoring, data analysis and equipment purchase/rental is unwarranted and unreasonable for RFAB funds.

SCORE (circle One)	Poor			Excellent
	0	5	(7.5)	10 15

E. Value of the Project to Fisheries Managers (25 points)

Do you believe the results of this project will further management of the species described? Will the results be useful to managers?

I am certain NOAA Fisheries will be interested in the monitoring results but I am uncertain of any benefits for state fishery managers.

SCORE (circle one)	Poor				Excellent
	0	5	(10)	15	20 25

**PLEASE ADD ANY FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSALS
BELOW:**

The Good---The education and outreach to anglers regarding marine mammals. The facilities at Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science hosting this effort are an ideal fit both in location and personnel. Utilizing the Outreach team (\$1,200 for 100 hours) to staff booths at major events likely frequented by anglers with a simple message and handout. Providing speakers on this topic at Angling Clubs meetings and possibly radio shows. Involving NOAA Protected resources and adopting successful ideas from the Northeast region where efforts to educate the public have been ongoing for over a decade.

The Bad---Designing a fairly expensive monitoring program based upon a single anomalous year to determine “compliance” with marine mammal protocol.

The Ugly---Turning the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science staff into potential Marine Mammal Police.