

POTOMAC RIVER FISHERIES COMMISSION
 COLONIAL BEACH, VIRGINIA
 October 11, 1966

Lewis Jones, Jr., Chairman, called the meeting to order at 8:00 p. m.

Members present: Commissioners H. C. Byrd, Milton T. Hickman, J. Clifford Hutt, Lewis Jones, Jr., Jeremiah Valliant, Vice-Chairman, and George J. Weems, Secretary.

Officers present: K. Thomas Everngam, Legal Officer; Robert M. Norris, Jr., Executive Secretary; Cdr. Roy W. Rafter; Inspector John Mattingly; Lt. Paul C. Wentzell; Lt. Harvey Cook; Chief J. William Ryland; Inspectors Donald O'Bier and E. Ralph Dameron; Maryland Seafood Auditor Thomas H. White; John Frye and Dallas Long, of the press.

The persons assembled were estimated to be four hundred (400) more or less, the auditorium of the firehouse being filled, as well as the adjoining garage space - the four (4) fire engines being removed to make room for the crowd. The time and place for this meeting had been publicized for three (3) days prior to the meeting on seven (7) radio stations (WBOC, WICO, WJDY, WDMV, WNNT, WKIK, WPTX) in tidewater Virginia, Southern Maryland and Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia, and through Associated press and in daily papers in Salisbury and Baltimore, Maryland and Richmond and Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Mr. Jones, Chairman, addressed the group, saying that this public meeting had been called to discuss what could be done about relieving the glut of oysters and invited anyone, who wished to do so, to come to the microphone and state his views, opinions and suggested remedies. Mr. Jones called attention to an order of the Commission that had been posted Monday. This order closed the river to oystering on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays until further notice, because of the present emergency; but whatever decision results from this meeting would supercede that action.

Mr. Jones recognized and asked Senator Frederick C. Malkus, Jr., of Dorchester County, Maryland, if he had a statement to make. Senator Malkus remarked that he had helped get the 1958 Compact agreement, and at this time would be an observer; he might have something to say later. (At the end of the public meeting, Senator Malkus said he had talked with 100-125 people since arriving at 4:00 p. m., and the consensus seemed that they want to work on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and some on Thursday. He ended by saying that he has faith in the Commission.)

Mr. Benny Rowe, of Gloucester, Virginia, as spokesman for 80 men, suggested complete closing until situation is relieved. Ten other tongers, equally divided between Maryland and Virginia, suggested closing river for three (3) days per week; two of them saying that it should be closed for two weeks first. Others in audience spoke up saying that closing for two weeks would constitute a hardship. Several Eastern Shore tongers said they could not stay for only 3 days work. One packer asked that upper river bars be closed, because of "pink" oysters. A tonger refuted this, saying a packer had told him there is no "pink" in upper river oysters so far this year. Mr. Harold R. Bassett, Executive Secretary of Chesapeake Seafood Packers Association, said that the excessive publicity regarding the "glut" has hurt the industry and suggested that any future publicity be held to the lowest minimum. There followed a total of seven (7) packers and buyers, whose suggestions were that some curtailment of tonging effort is needed, and that a two (2) or three (3) consecutive days per week closing of the river is needed immediately. A total of fourteen (14) tongers spoke, including those who stated they were representing groups, recommending either closing for a period of one to two weeks and then re-opening on a limited basis; or, closing for two or three days each week. Many of the packers and tongers who spoke recommended closing the river permanently on Saturdays.

At 9:25 p. m., Mr. Jones adjourned the public meeting, after pointing out that there are many more licensed tongers in the Potomac this year than ever before, and that with a five (5) day period before any Commission action can be effective, the tongers are the only ones who can voluntarily relieve the situation, if they will, by not tonging the last two or three days this week. He stated that the Commission will bring a decision to the tongers in a very short time, and that if the Potomac River is closed to tonging, the Commission of Fisheries of Virginia will also close the Virginia tributaries, including the Great Wicomico, at the same time or times.

At 9:45 p.m., the Commission re-convened in session in the headquarters conference room, with the Commissioners and Officers named above present.

After consideration of the oyster situation, a motion was offered by Mr. Hutt, seconded by Dr. Weems, as follows:

"That pursuant to Regulation II, Section 3, Sub-section (b) of the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the Potomac River be temporarily closed to oyster tonging on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of each week, beginning on October 20, 1966, with the provision that the Chairman and Executive Secretary, upon poll of the Commissioners, have the authority to open the Potomac River to oyster tonging on subsequent Thursdays and/or Fridays". Motion was approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.


CHAIRMAN


SECRETARY