

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Potomac River Fisheries Commission
La Plata, Maryland
February 11, 2000**

Commissioners Present: Paul H. Kellam, III (MD) – Chairman, Gordon M. Birkett (VA) – Vice Chairman, John T. Parran (MD) – Secretary, William A. Pruitt (VA), William L. Rice, Sr. (MD), John W. White, Sr. (VA) and Kenneth W. Williams, Sr. (VA). Sarah Taylor-Rogers (MD) was unable to attend.

Officers Present: Kirby A. Carpenter – Executive Secretary, J. Clifford Hutt and Michael C. Mayo – Legal Counsel

Press Present: Todd Shields - The Washington Post, Steve Scala – Northern Neck Tide

Others Present: Bill Sieling – Maryland Department of Agriculture Seafood Marketing, Ellen Cosby – VMRC, Eileen Setzler-Hamilton, CBL, Dr. Herb Austin and Chris Hager – VIMS, Sgt. Charles Santerre – MdDNR Law Enforcement, Capt. M. Ray Jewell – VMRC Law Enforcement; Jim Drummond, John W. Dean, Kenneth Wicker, and Marvin Harley, James A. Bowling, Dennis Newton, John Osakowicz, David Bradley – Finfish Advisory Committee; John F. Tucker Brown, Elgin Nininger, Jr., Charles Clift, George Smith, Craig Kelley, Dean Bowie, John Morris, Jr., – Shellfish Advisory Committee; George Bowling, Louis Whittaker, Dan McDougal, Judy McDougal, Clarence McKenny, Jimmy Trossbach, John L. Trossbach, George Moon, William Webb, Jeff Kemp, William Wicker, Dale Scheible, Richard Daiger, Bill Bartlett, Robert T. Brown, Douglas F. Jenkins, Sr., Thomas R. Hodges, Tom Hodges, Jr., James M. Morris, Terry Conway, John Burke, Phyllis Frere, Wayne Morgan, Sr., Mike Gadwill, Diana Gadwill, Bert Hayden, Mike Hayden, Eddie Hayden, Jerry Decatur, Sr., Jason Decatur, Billy D. Duty, Walter I. Maddox, Sr., George Perry, Jerry Decatur, Jr., Joseph M. Harley, Dennis Fleming, Dennis Edwards, J. L. Higgs, Keith Lumpkins, Jack Day, Phil Hayden, Gerry Leinneweber, David Layman, John Morris, III, Gladston Tyler, Jr., Raymond L. Payne, Earl Jett, Kevin Payne, Diane Newton, Harvey Stine, Jr., Thomas Swann, Sr., Thomas Swann, Jr., Dennis H. Gallahan, Willy Rawlings, Herman Delvo, Paul Jenkins, Richard P. Jenkins, Ronald Turner, Raymond McNeal, Robert Tippet, Thomas Tippet, III, Thomas Tippet, Jr., Bruce R. Scheible, N. Keith McGuire, Bruce Tugwell, Roger L. Norris, Bill Montgomery, Richard J. Watson, Christi Daley, Larry W. Bowling, Buddy Scala, Jim Berthe, Tarry Chappelle, Richard A. Jenkins, James C. Patton, Fred Jameson, Joseph Hawkins and several others who did not sign the guest register.

Chairman Kellam called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Commissioner Parran provided an invocation.

Consideration of Minutes

Commissioner Parran made *a motion to approve the minutes of November 19, 1999 as written and distributed*. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rice and unanimously approved.

Shellfish Advisory Committee Report

Tucker Brown presented the following report of actions taken at the last Shellfish Advisory Committee meeting held on February 7, 2000, regarding their review of the public hearing proposals:

1. Peeler Pot Season – The committee voted (12 yes, 4 no) to recommend a peeler pot season of May 1 through August 31.
2. Peeler Pot Construction – The committee voted (unanimous) to recommend two additional (for a total of four) 1-1/2” cull rings be placed in peeler pots, beginning with the 2000 season. They further recommended no change in peeler pot mesh size.
3. Increase Minimum Size Limit on Male and Immature Female Hard Crabs – The committee voted (15 yes, 1 no) to recommend maintaining the current minimum size limit on male hard crabs but ban the harvest of immature female hard crabs at all times.
4. Prohibit Commercial Crabbing One Day per Week – The committee voted (unanimous) to recommend allowing commercial crabbing to continue 7 days per week.
5. Daily Time Limit – The committee voted (10 yes, 6 no) to recommend continuing the current time limits of 1 hour before sunrise to sunset.

6. Set Regulations by Order – The committee voted (12 yes, 4 no) to recommend approval of the provision to allow daily crab harvest limits to be established by Commission ORDER rather than by regulation.
7. Color Scheme – The committee voted (12 yes, 4 no) to recommend requiring each crab pot licensee to paint their crab pot buoys the same color scheme.
8. 10% Reduction in Crab Pots for Three Years – The committee voted (unanimously) to recommend no reduction in crab pot gear.

Other committee actions at their last meeting included an announcement that several committee member's terms would expire March 31st and directed those interested in continuing to serve on the committee, or anyone else wishing to become a member, to contact the PRFC Office so their name can be put on the list of nominations. Mr. John Morris suggested different color decals be provided for the different levels of crab pots licensed, i.e., 300 pots, 400 pots and 500 pots. He felt it might be helpful to have this identification easily visible to other crabbers as well as law enforcement. Tucker Brown thanked the Committee members for a job well done.

Crab Harvest Report

A preliminary report on 1999 Potomac River crab landings during April through November was presented, which showed a total of 129,763 bushels of hard crabs and 72,028 pounds of peelers harvested. This was compared to the 1998 totals of 129,302 bushels of hard crabs and 86,862 pounds of peelers.

The Executive Secretary noted that the number of hard crabs in 1998 and 1999 are just below the long-term average of 145,261, whereas the number of peelers for 1998 and 1999 are just above the long-term average of 62,569. He also stated the weekly catch reports show that during 1999 a total of 487 trips were made with 30 or more bushels being harvested. One hundred ninety four trips had occurred before September 25th, (when the 30-bushel daily limit went into effect) and 293 trips had limited out at 30 bushels after September 25th. In essence, 300 trips had been impacted by the 30-bushel limit.

Several graphs were presented which showed the historical crab harvest data. The first chart was the total pounds harvested and the number of crab pot licenses sold from 1964 through 1999. This shows that 1999 is close to 1998 in terms of pounds harvested, and that 1997 was an all time record harvest for the Potomac River. In the late 60s, 200-220 licenses were sold which increased to 380-420 in the 80s before climbing steadily since the early 90s. License sales peaked in 1996 when the moratorium was put on where 593 licenses were issued that year and there is currently a program in place to reduce the number of licenses by attrition.

The peeler harvest chart shows that between 1988-1991 crabbers were harvesting just over 200,000 peelers per year (in numbers of crabs) which has increased to over 400,000 in 1997 and 1998. The harvest declined in 1999 to about 350,000 peelers.

A chart, which shows the number of boats and the number of pots being fished each month, was also presented. It shows that the number of boats being fished in the middle part of the summer has remained relatively constant, but there has been an increase in the number of pots being fished. From 1986 through 1991 the fishery was relatively stable. In 1992 the number of pots begins to increase until 1997 and 1998 where the record numbers of pots were being set. A slight decrease of pots being set occurred in 1999, but still well above the long-term average.

The next chart shows that about 50% of the total harvest area is downstream of St. Clements Island, 25% is from St. Clements Island to the 301 Bridge, and 25% is from the 301 Bridge to DC. In 1988 the area above the 301 Bridge accounted for 18% of the total harvest, the middle part of the river accounted for the same amount and the lower part of the river accounted for about 64%. An increasing trend in the percentage of the harvest occurring upstream of the 301 Bridge was noted. The 301 Bridge to St. Clements Island area remained relatively stable and the area between St. Clements Island and Point Lookout has been cut in half, producing a third of the harvest. The upriver shift in the fishery was also shown in the number of pots being fished in each area each year. Data was also presented which showed in 3 of the last 4 years more than 50% of the yearly harvest occurred in just September and October.

The number of pots being set was relatively constant from 1986 through 1990. It began to increase in 1991 and reached an all time high in 1998. In the late 80s the CPUE of 22-25 pounds per pot set increased to about 30 in 1991. Since then as the number of pots has been increasing the catch per pot has been decreasing to the point where it is now below 15 lbs/pot. Between 1986-1999, with the exception of 1997, which was a record year, the harvest has remained fairly constant. Crabbers are now fishing twice as many pots as in 1986-90, to catch the same number of crabs.

The percent of female crab harvest in the Potomac River has ranged from a low of 30% in 1991 to a high of 45% in 1994. While it fluctuates each year, it and has hovered in that 30-40% range.

Open Public Hearing

Chairman Kellam opened the public hearing at 10:05 a.m.

The Executive Secretary reported that all items scheduled for public hearing today had been advertised in conformity with requirements of the Compact.

Several watermen spoke in opposition of making any changes for the peeler pots because it makes up such a small percentage of the total harvest. It was also stated that weather conditions were not taken into consideration. Terry Conway stated that peeler crabs make up 2.7% of the total harvest and in late April there is a heavy peeler market. If watermen were denied this part of their run, it would deplete up to 42% of their business. He felt that a May 1st start date was very harsh and suggested an April 15th start date.

It was suggested that a young of year index be established in order to find out where peelers start and where they are lost. Phil Jones stated that Maryland and Virginia have been conducting the Winter Dredge Survey for a number of years. It can generally predict what the harvest is going to be from the number of crabs that are being caught during the survey, but it is not a "young of the year" like that for striped bass.

Several watermen were opposed to the 5 ½" size limit. Mr. Jimmy Trossbach stated that there weren't any 5 ½" male crabs in the lower part of the river and it will force these crabbers to go above the bridge, in order to catch the male crabs.

There was concern over allowing the Commission to establish daily bushel/barrel limits by Order. Many watermen were concerned that the public wouldn't be able to voice their opinions prior to the Commission making any decisions. The Executive Secretary clarified that the difference between an Order and a Regulation is that of timing and cost to the Commission. He stated that a change to the Regulations requires a legal advertisement in newspapers along the river for 3 consecutive weeks and that a formal hearing be held. To change an Order only requires that public notice be given of a public meeting, and the Order can be enacted in 30 days.

Dan McDougal stated that there wasn't data available on effort level, number of peeler pots fished, and how many peelers are being caught. He feels that had a database been set up he would be defending less than 1% of the total landings now. He suggested that the Committee was not given proper data to make a truly informed decision. He said he was informed by a PRFC official that the committee saw the same data provided to him, but the committee came away with a different opinion. He noted that the Shellfish Advisory Committee did not endorse any of the proposals on January 18th after his presentation concerning peeler pots. He was opposed to a pot reduction even though he has seen data that supports a pot reduction, however didn't find any data that would suggest or support new rules on peeler pots. He formally requests to see the data to support any new regulations on peeler pots.

Louis Whittaker was opposed to peeler pot season stating that it was not necessary because it is governed by Mother Nature. He found that in his end of the river the season is from May 1st through September. In recent years the spring has been cool, therefore there has not been a good May run, however, what crabbers lose in May they regain in September. He was also opposed to the additional cull rings in peeler pots stating that it is not required in Virginia and a peeler pot is not a crab pot. He feels that it is a waste of time and energy to put in cull rings. Robert T. Brown endorses the Shellfish Advisory Committee recommendations, but felt the size of the gill net should remain the same. He suggested that the peeler potters have a separate catch report form so that everyone could have the

information. Wayne Morgan was opposed to a time limit stating that there are no facts to support it and all this will do is put part time crabbers and school kids out of business. Terry Conway stated that Maryland and Virginia are working on a Bi-State Commission to regulate crabs. He suggested waiting to make any decisions until their report is finalized so that Maryland, Virginia and PRFC all have the same set of regulations.

Gill Net Size

Several watermen spoke in opposition to reducing the gill net mesh size. It was suggested that this item go before the Finfish Advisory Committee for recommendations.

There being no other comments from the public, the Chairman closed the public hearing at 10:40 a.m.

Close Public Hearing

Recess

The Chairman called a recess at 10:40 a.m.

The Commission reconvened at 10:47 a.m.

Crab Presentation by Phil Jones

Phil Jones reported on the crab problems in the bay-wide area. He stated that the number of spawners has decreased. Maryland, Virginia and PRFC have been working through the Bi-State Blue Crab Advisory Committee to establish some targets for blue crabs and are looking at ways to improve the abundance of crabs and improve the economics of the blue crab fishery. This process will be complete in July of 2001 and the technical committee will then make its recommendations to the Chesapeake Bay Commission.

Commissioner Pruitt stated that getting factual data for the crab is going to be harder to get than any other species because one weather event off the coast causes more damage than the peeler industry and the hard crab industry can do in a season.

Consideration of Regulation Changes

Commissioner Pruitt was in agreement with Mr. McDougal that the balance-management approach between Maryland, Virginia and the Potomac River as a bay-wide effort must be in effect in order to regulate the river effectively.

Commissioner Williams stated that several factors had been left out and needed to be taken into consideration such as the rockfish, which eat little crabs and it is unknown exactly how many they eat. He also suggested that sanctuaries be established for crabs in order to better manage this resource. He stated that cull rings are a waste of time and effort for peeler pots. He also recommended that the Commission add someone from the peeler potter industry to the Shellfish Advisory Committee.

Commissioner's Parran and Birkett both agreed that Maryland, Virginia and PRFC laws need to be similar in order to better regulate the river.

Commissioner Birkett agreed with Commissioner Williams that there should be equal numbers of crabbers and peeler potters on the Shellfish Advisory Committee so that there could be a fair representation.

Commissioner Rice complimented the public for their comments. He stated that the Commission needs to take into consideration the weather because if there is another year of normal rainfall there will be no crabs up river. They also need to look at the peeler pot fishery as a separate fishery. He stated that currently data is not available that says if the peeler crabs are coming from the peeler pots or the crab pots, or how many peeler pots are being fished.

Reg. VII, Section 3(a) Peeler Pot Season – A motion was made by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner Parran and unanimously approved to ***take no action***.

Reg. VII Section 1(c) Cull Ring Requirements for Peeler Pots – A motion was made by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously approved to ***take no action.***

Reg. VII, Section 5(b) Mesh Size Requirements for Peeler Pots - A motion was made by Commissioner Pruitt, seconded by Commissioner Williams and unanimously approved to ***take no action.***

Reg. VII, Section 2(a) Crab Size Limits – A motion was made by Commissioner Rice, seconded by Commissioner Williams and unanimously approved to ***take no action.***

Reg. VII, Section 4(b) Prohibit Sunday or Monday Daily Time Limits – A motion was made by Commissioner Rice, seconded by Commissioner Williams and unanimously approved to ***take no action.***

Reg. VII Section 6(a) Bushel Limits – The Legal Officer stated that the Commission already has this authority for most of the other fisheries but not for the crab. This Regulation would give the Commission flexibility in the event of a development that did require immediate action. A motion was made by Commissioner Parran, seconded by Commissioner White to modify Reg. VII, Section 6(a) as follows:

Reg. VII, Section 6(a) Catch Limits. The Commission may from time to time and by appropriate Order, specify a daily crab harvest limit. Such limit may be for the entire season or only specified period(s) of time, for all or only specified life stages and/or sexes. It shall be unlawful for the owner, captain, master, or any member of the crew of any boat licensed hereunder to take, catch, sell, offer to buy or sell, expose for sale, or have in possession more than the limit(s) specified in such order.

The motion was approved (6 yes, 1 no).

Reg. I, Section 2(d)(1) Reduction of Number of Crab Pots - The Executive Secretary stated that this proposal would reduce the number of pots by 10% each year for three years as well as require the marking of all crab pots belonging to the same boat with the same color cork. A motion was made by Commissioner Rice, seconded by Commissioner Williams and unanimously approved to ***take no action regarding the number of crab pots.***

Reg. I, Section 2(d)(1) Crab Pot Buoy Identification – A motion was made to adopt Reg. I, Section 2(d)(1) by Commissioner Pruitt, seconded by Commissioner Birkett, and approved (6 yes, 1 no) as follows:

Reg. I, Section 2(d)(1) Crab Pots. For each boat or vessel used in taking or catching crabs with crab pots, as defined in Regulation VII, Section 1(a), a minimum license fee of \$100.00 valid for the use of up to 300 crab pots. A maximum number of crab pot licenses may be established from time to time by the Commission thereby making it a limited entry fishery. A license fee of \$150.00 for up to 400 crab pots and a license fee of \$200.00 for up to 500 crab pots shall also be available for 1995 to those persons holding a valid 1994 crab pot license. Providing that thereafter, such persons may continue to renew their license for the number of pots selected in 1995 or for a lesser number of pots as set forth above, but in no instance for more than the number of pots licensed in the preceding year. No more than one license may be issued to any single boat and the maximum number of pots may not exceed the number specified on the license. Each crab pot set in the water shall be marked with a buoy easily visible on the surface which must legibly display the boat decal number herein provided in not less than one (1) inch numbers in contrasting color. All crab pot buoys with the same decal number must be painted alike and a sample buoy shall be displayed aboard the licensed vessel. Each buoy shall have only one Potomac River boat decal number displayed and all such buoys set in the Potomac shall be deemed to be crab pots. The boat decal must be displayed in a clearly visible position on the outside starboard side of the hull of the boat or vessel. Any crab pot in the water not identified in this manner may be seized by the duly authorized enforcement officers and shall be subject to forfeiture. Whenever crab pots are being set, fished or removed the license must be aboard the boat or vessel and available for inspection by an authorized enforcement officer of the State of Maryland or Virginia or agent of the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. Renewal of such license shall be pursuant to Regulation I, Section 1(c).

A motion was made by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner Pruitt and approved (6 yes, 1 no) *to set the effective date for the identification of crab pot buoys as January 1, 2001.*

Sizes of Mesh for Gill Nets

The Executive Secretary stated that the PRFC is still abiding by the 14% reduction and several of the northern states submitted proposals this week to ASMFC to take credits for prior actions. PRFC is looking at 14% reduction for this year and next year unless there is an Amendment from ASMFC.

Ellen Cosby stated that in Virginia from January 1st through May 25th watermen couldn't use gill nets between 3¾" and 6". The striped bass season starts February 1st for commercial gear and from March 26th through June 15th use of anything greater than 6" mesh is prohibited. Also, a slot limit of 18" minimum and 26" maximum was established. Instead of going with the 37" maximum, which was the proposal, the Virginia striped bass season will end on December 23rd for the commercial fishery, which will protect the large fish during the end of December.

Commissioner Rice asked if it was possible to have a separate size limit for the fall season because he was concerned that in the spring catching a fish that is 35" is not a big problem and he asked if the Commission could do something similar to what Virginia has done to meet our size limit restrictions in the fall and let them keep what they catch in their 7" nets and possibly take a day or two off the season and still be in compliance with the 14% reduction.

The Executive Secretary responded that there aren't enough large fish being caught in the fall that closing for a day or two would keep us in compliance. It would be more like a month or more because there are so few larger fish during that period. He reminded the Commission that the 35" maximum size limit applies not only to the gill netters but also to all other gear types starting June 1st when the seasons reopen. He said that if the Commission chooses to investigate something of that nature it would require submission of an amendment of our fishing plan to ASMFC and needs to be approved by the striped bass management board before it could be implemented. Commissioner Rice recommended that staff pursue other alternatives for the fall season so that they could have a larger size limit in the fall.

The Executive Secretary stated that one of the options to look at was that last year the Commission extended the season five days into March and data was shown which proved that those last five days increased the average size fish by 50%. In order to accomplish the 14% reduction in large fish and keep what is caught most of the year, reducing that March season may work.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rice, seconded by Commissioner Williams and unanimously approved to *take no action.*

Financial Report

A report on the second quarter (July through December 1999) disbursements was presented with budget items totaling \$127,322.63. No unusual disbursements were noted in the regular operating budget.

A report of cash on hand as of February 4, 2000 was presented as follows:

First Virginia Bank (Checking – includes \$400 petty cash)	\$ 95,065.28
Nations Bank (Savings – DNR License Sales)	17,524.43
Virginia Local Government Investment Pool	244,057.11
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool	<u>239,395.55</u>
	\$ 596,042.37

The following motion was made by Commissioner Parran, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously approved:

“That the second quarter disbursements of \$127,322.63 be approved as presented.”

Oyster Harvest Report

An oyster harvest report was presented which showed the amount of tax collected, licenses sold and oyster harvest by bar and gear for the period of October 1, 1999 through February 1, 2000. Tongers (63 boat licenses) reported 8,097 bushels while handscrapers (14 boats) reported 474 bushels for a total harvest of 8,571 bushels.

ASMFC Issues

The Executive Secretary reported that he had attended the ASMFC meetings, which were held February 7th through 10th in Alexandria, VA.

Striped Bass – A number of the northern states have proposed, and been approved plans where they have gotten credit for past conservation efforts. Some of the states, which had been allowed to go to a 2 fish creel limit under the old plan, had maintained a 1 fish creel limit. Some of the other states had reduced their season and/or their creel limits in order to accomplish their 14% reduction. They are now getting restarted on Amendment 6 and there is a chance that there will be a new Amendment 6 by January 2001.

The Executive Secretary reminded the public that bay-wide quotas would more than likely come down in 2001. Commissioner Williams asked why the quotas were continually going down when we have a recovered species? The Executive Secretary stated that the young of the year index is taken each year and then “grown up” in order to project how many 18” fish will be there in 3-4 years. The quotas have not gone down in the past 3 years but have remained fairly constant. All fish that are going to be harvested next year are already “in the bank”, which means that there won’t be any new fish added until after next year’s spawn. If next year’s spawn is very successful the quotas could go up in three years. The whole system is designed on taking out a percentage based on the number of fish that are available within the legal size ranges. The other bit of information that is used in this equation is the spawning stock index, and we have seen this index begin to drop over the past 2-3 years, which is why we are trying to conserve the age 8+ fish.

Weakfish – The weakfish management board met and there seems to be a turnaround in this fishery. ASMFC will be looking at a new Amendment to that plan to begin to operate in a restored fishery status. In the mean time we should hold status quo for the 2000 recreational and commercial fisheries in the Potomac.

Eel – The eel management board changed some of the young of the year survey requirements. PRFC is required under the plan to provide young of the year survey data for the eel fishery given the fact that the Potomac River ranks #2 ahead of all other states except Virginia along the Atlantic coast in eel landings.

Dr. Herb Austin reported that the technical committee members from Maryland and Virginia met February 10th in Colonial Beach, VA to discuss possible locations for sampling and defining. PRFC is required to do a 6-week monitoring starting the first part of March. We need to find places where changes in land ownership aren’t going to prevent us from sampling in the future. Currently, we are looking at state and federal properties to sample. Something needs to be in place and operational this year.

Summer Flounder – A proposal was submitted this year to have the same season, size and creel limit for the recreational fishery as the Maryland portion of the Chesapeake Bay. Virginia also put in their proposal to have the Virginia tributaries of the Potomac River be the same as what the PRFC’s are so there would be some uniformity. Virginia’s plan was approved, however neither Maryland or the PRFC’s plan was approved. It looks like any season, size and creel limit combination to achieve the 41% reduction from the 1998 levels will have a starting date in May. For the year 2000, not only will we have to reduce by 41% but we will have to pay a penalty based on the enforcement or lack thereof. PRFC is tied to the Maryland Enforcement Penalty. He reported that the Maryland Enforcement Penalty is higher than the Virginia Enforcement Penalty. Staff is trying to work out a deal that we can claim that both states are enforcing our laws.

Update Orders

The Executive Secretary recommended postponing any action until the April meeting.

Pound Net Cull Ring Study

Mr. Chris Hager presented the pound net cull ring study. The objective of this study was to design a release device that would lower weakfish and flounder mortality by 33%. Several different panels were tested. Panel #1 was made up of 2” rings; later it was found that reducing the size of the rings to 1 7/8” would reduce the escape of most legal weakfish. The slots on panel #2 were designed for flounder; Panel #3 was a combination of the two, which was more efficient for releasing both weakfish and flounder.

Several different tests were performed with panels consisting of 24 rings and 12 slots. The first test was performed with the panels located in the front corners of the net, the second test was performed with the panels in both the front and back of the net open. The number of the rings and slots are exactly the same but the location is different ½ of them are in the front of the net and ½ of them are in the back of the net. The third test was performed with the panels all in the back.

The most functional panel design tested contained the largest number of rings and slots. It did improve the catch per unit effort for spot by an average of 1" and blues by an average of 2". It also released approximately 28% of the illegal croaker and trout as well as 14% of the illegal flounder. It is not letting out enough of the illegal flounder but there are ½ as many slots, which were designed for flounder, as there are rings, which were designed for trout. If the number of slots were doubled there would be a 28% for flounder as well.

The Executive Secretary thanked Chris Hager for his presentation and hard work. He also acknowledged Mr. Dean and Mr. Bradley for their help and cooperation.

New Business

Finfish Advisory Committee

Jim Drummond said he would schedule a meeting of the Finfish Advisory Committee to review the proposals discussed today as soon as possible.

Crab Catch Report Form

The Executive Secretary noted that several comments had been made during the public hearing regarding the lack of peeler pot information. He stated that the crab catch report form could be revised to stipulate that crabbers provide information on peeler harvests. Staff will bring back different designs to the Shellfish Advisory Committee and to the Commission to get approval for the report form for next year. Everyone must realize that the form is going to get more complicated and more questions must be answered in order to collect this additional data.

Advisory Committee By-Laws

The Executive Secretary recommended reviewing the advisory committee bylaws and bring back suggestions on re-vamping the committee into different sections such as having a single committee for just crabs and another committee for oysters and clams. It was also noted that currently no recreational crabbers participate on the committee.

Hook and Line Quota

Commissioner Rice asked what percent of the commercial hook and line striped bass fishery were landed this year for their quota. The Executive Secretary felt that they will be well below their quota. Commissioner Rice stated that the resource should be used and directed the Finfish Advisory Committee to come up with a plan that would enable the Commission to issue more licenses for the hook and line.

Jim Drummond requested data from the Commission on how those current hook and line license holders are using their tags, how many aren't fishing, how many are waiting for the big fish, and how many are catching smaller fish.

Commercial Hook and Line Drawing

The Executive Secretary reported that there was 1 commercial hook and line license available for a license drawing. There were 278 entries received, the drawing was held on Monday, February 7, 2000 at 12 noon and was won by Karen Roselle of La Plata, Maryland.

Nominating Committee Report and Election of Officers

Commissioner Pruitt, reporting for the Nominating Committee, presented the following slate of officers for 2000: Chairman – Gordon M. Birkett; Vice Chairman – William L. Rice, Sr., and Secretary – John T. Parran. There being no other nominations, ***a motion was made by Commissioner Pruitt, seconded by Chairman Kellam and unanimously approved to accept the 2000 slate of officers as presented.***

Announcement of Vacancies of Finfish and Shellfish Advisory Committee Members

The Executive Secretary announced that 1/3 of the memberships of the Advisory Committees expire each year. A list of the vacancies for each Committee was distributed.

Mr. Douglas Jenkins was concerned that some members of the committee have not been attending these meetings and this is a problem. He would like to submit some names of people for consideration with the expectation that they make all the meetings and if they can't let them know so someone can attend in their place.

The Executive Secretary stated that there is a provision in the by-laws for people who do not attend meetings or have unexcused absences to be removed from the committee. He also stated that they all serve 3-year terms however, not all positions come available every year.

Commissioner Pruitt recommended that a special crab committee be set up.

The Executive Secretary pointed out that the Finfish Advisory Committee has been working very well. The problem that he sees with the Shellfish Advisory Committee is that they are incorporating oysters, crabs and clams. The idea of having an oyster/clam committee and a crab committee might provide better representation. He suggested letting the Legal Officer and Staff review the bylaws of the committee and present the Commission with some suggested alterations to that which may help to address some of these issues.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday April 14, 2000 at 9:30 a.m. in Colonial Beach, VA

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul H. Kellam, III, Chairman

John T. Parran, Secretary