

FINFISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

November 6, 2013

PRFC Office, Colonial Beach, VA

Members Present

Harry Boyden – Charles Co. Watermen’s Assoc.
James A. Bowling – Charles County Comm. Fisherman
Robert T. Brown, Sr. – St. Mary’s Waterman’s Assoc.
Thomas Crowder, Sr. – St. Mary’s Co. Comm. Fisherman
Jeffrey Pharis – MD Charter Boat Captain
George Willett, Jr. – MD Recreational Fisherman
Martin Duby – St. Mary’s Co. Recreational Fisherman
Thomas L Lewis – Northumberland Comm. Fisherman
Kenneth Wicker – Westmoreland Comm. Fisherman
Elgin Nininger – Proxy for Arthur L. Loving
Jeff W. Schenemann – VA Comm. Fisherman Up. River
Dandridge Crabbe – VA Charter Boat Captain
Michael Meier – VA Recreational Fisherman
Steve Scala – Lower River Rec. Fisherman

PRFC Commissioners

William Rice, Sr.
Dennis Fleming
Ida Hall

Support Staff Present

MPO. Mike Simms – VMRC Law Enforcement
Sgt. C.L. Simmons – MdDNR Law Enforcement
Ellen Cosby – PRFC Staff
Becky Butler – PRFC Staff
Cathy Friend – PRFC Staff
Marty Gary – PRFC Staff

Press

None

Members Absent

Capt. Brady Bounds – MD Recreational Fisherman
Paul Downey – VA Recreational Fisherman

Others Present:

Wayne France – Oyster/Clam Advisory Committee, Bob Bowes, Kyle Schick, Geryl Blackwell, Daryl Blackwell, Amy Nelson, Joe Nelson, Victoria Brown and several others who did not sign the guest register.

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 6:30 and stated there is a full agenda to go through tonight and thanked everyone for attending.

Mr. Gary introduced himself as the new Executive Secretary who took AC Carpenter’s position on July 1st of this year. He previously worked at Maryland Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Service for 27+ years. He thanked current and former Commissioners for attending tonight’s meeting and stated he looked forward to working with the Finfish Advisory Committee.

Review of Performance Metrics

Mr. Gary referred to a press release that was included in the packet from ASMFC – “Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Assessment Finds Resource Not Overfished and Overfishing Not Occurring”. The main takeaway from this meeting is that the 2013 Atlantic striped bass benchmark assessment indicated the resource is not overfished or experiencing overfishing relative to the proposed new reference points defined in the assessment. Although the stock is not overfished, female spawning stock biomass (SSB) has continued to decline since 2004 and is estimated at 128 million pounds, just above the SSB threshold of 127 million pounds and below the SSB target of 159 million pounds. Projections of female SSB and fishing mortality suggest if the current fishing mortality rate (0.20) is maintained during 2013-2017, the probability of the stock being overfished is high and increases until 2015-2016, but declines thereafter. This trend

is driven by the lack of strong year classes currently in the fishery, and the emergence of the strong 2011 year class that will mature into the spawning stock in three to four years.

Given these findings and the management plan's triggers, the Management Board initiated the development of two draft addenda. The first addendum will propose adoption of the new fishing mortality reference points recommended by the benchmark assessment. The second addendum will propose a range of commercial and recreational management measures to reduce fishing mortality to at least the target, with a proposed implementation date of January 2015.

Chairman Brown questioned how ASMFC determines fishing mortality on the charts they provided on their press release. Mr. Gary explained they are typically found through fishery dependent and independent surveys and through a tag and recapture program. Chairman Brown then questioned the new targets that they are bringing in. Mr. Gary responded they are simply a reflection of the updated information from the stock assessment.

Chairman Brown is concerned with the figures they are using based on their determining factors. He feels they are working off "guesstimates". Mr. Gary stated he would not dispute that opinion and stated there's nobody out there that can say we know exactly what's going on. There are observations being made from the science and data, but we all know this is politics and science colliding with each other. There was overarching evidence that we were seeing a decline in recruitment, because of the successive years of weak recruitment. We're not seeing the same situation we saw in the 1990's. You will start seeing the effects of that next year with a 14% increase in the overall quota.

Kenneth Wicker question what the findings were for the young of the year (YOY) survey. Mr. Gary stated it was below average and generally speaking everyone was very optimistic for this upcoming year. Mr. Wicker stated he's trying to find the answer to how much of a reduction is the Chesapeake Bay fishery receiving for having an 18" minimum size limit. He stated he has been unsuccessful with trying to get an answer from ASMFC. Mr. Gary stated he could try to get an answer to that question. Mr. Wicker stated in 2015 when all these new indexes will be put into play, there may be a possibility to get an increase in poundage if the minimum size limit was larger than 18". Mr. Gary replied he would like a motion from the committee if they would like him to look further into that theory.

Consideration of Increasing the Minimum Size Limit

Mr. Gary explained that current PRFC Chairman, Dennis Fleming, asked that this issue be brought to the committee tonight from a recreational standpoint. Commissioner Fleming is a light tackle guide and a recreational fisherman, and he is frustrated from the prospective of 18" fish providing a quality fish for a paying client. He wanted the idea discussed tonight of having a larger minimum size limit that would provide a better quality fish for his clients as well as for recreational fishermen. He would like the committee's thought on this.

Mr. Wicker responded that's why he asked how much of a percentage would be gained if the minimum size limit was increased. Mr. Gary stated in all fairness, the committee may not be

able to discuss this issue without having that data. Mr. Wicker stated that the market is looking for striped bass eight pounds or larger.

Chairman Brown stated the committee needed more information before it would discuss this issue any further. He felt that this species is starting to be micro-managed and if the size limit is increased, we have to consider how it will affect other species. We can't just look at striped bass alone.

Danny Crabbe stated in the charter boat industry in September, October and a good part of November, we catch mainly 18" to 22" fish and now it's starting to pick up. If the size limit were increased to 21" or 22" that would put a hurting on the charter fishing business.

Discussion of Future Quotas and Tag Allocations

Mr. Gary explained that through the stock assessment, there are two quotas set along the coast. One is the migratory component of the stock, which we are not involved in, and the other is a separate quota developed for the Chesapeake Bay. This quota includes Maryland, Virginia and the Potomac River. The quota is developed using a harvest control model that measures the input of those fish as they go into the exploitable range, in our case it is 18". Because of the strong 2011 year class, the Bay quota will increase by 14% in 2014.

Mr. Gary stated although the Potomac River gill net fishery over-harvested for the last three years, the overall quota was not exceeded so no penalty was imposed by ASMFC. When he started looking at the performance of the different PRFC fisheries, he found something that he feels needs to be discussed. He explained that when the quota was divided between the states, Maryland received 53%, Virginia received 32% and the remaining 15% went to the PRFC. Our 15% quota equates to about 1.3 million pounds. Somewhere along the line, the Commission developed a theory as to how it would split up the 15% quota between the gears with 55% going to the commercial fishery, 40% going to the recreational fishery and 5% going to the charter fishery. It's the commercial fishery allocation that needs to be reviewed and discussed to see if this committee wants to recommend adjusting the percentages allotted between the gears.

Mr. Gary stated what he did not anticipate running into was when he looked at the recreational portion, where 40% equates to 526,000 pounds, which is significant. He's been talking to recreational fishermen on the river and knows there's not a lot of effort out in the river and he's not hearing there's a lot of fish being caught. He's wondering how much of the 526,000 pounds is really being caught. He has found out that through the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) there is no Potomac River specific estimate. We really don't know what is being harvested from the Potomac River. From 1990 to 2004 when we collected the data, the highest poundage harvested in the recreational fishery was 190,000 pounds. He felt the recreational quota is not being used and wanted to make those findings available to this committee. As a fishery manager, his job is to make sure he is managing efficiently each sector and to provide all necessary data to this committee for discussion.

Mr. Wicker stated that it sounds like it's all going to change in 2015 anyway from ASMFC.

Mr. Gary stated that he believes 40% of the total PRFC quota is not being used. Chairman Brown questioned how much is being caught now by the recreational fishery. Mr. Gary replied if he had to guess, he would say probably not even 50,000 pounds is being harvested each year, but he really didn't know.

Jeffrey Pharis stated some data may be available from the charter boat fishery because they were required to report until 2005. He felt if it's a big difference, then he would be all for adjusting the quota, however he's not ready to make a decision until we look further into it.

Mr. Gary stated staff is not proposing any changes at this point, but wanted to make the information available should the committee decide to recommend any changes to how the quota is divided. The charter boat fishery receives five percent of the 1.3 million quota, which would equate to 65,874 pounds. He noted that the charter boat fishery is also not coming close to reaching its quota.

Chairman Brown felt this issue needs more discussion. If we have 526,000 pounds of quota available, we could set aside enough quota to justify and take care of the sport fishing industry. He felt if they are not catching the fish and not participating into the fishery enough to catch it, and until some type of reporting came in which could document what they are catching, then we could readjust it at that time. It could be shifted for us to catch in the commercial fishery if we changed the provision of it. However, we do not want to jeopardize the sport fishery at all. We have to protect them. It's not right that we are not utilizing the quota that is provided to us. He thinks we should make some kind of proposal to the Commission to take a look at this.

Mr. Gary stated he advised Commissioners O'Connell and Travelstead of this and they both agreed that the recreational harvest is being accounted for and that if the committee wanted to recommend something they would be willing to consider it.

Martin Duby stated a survey was conducted a while ago for Maryland where they tried to figure out how to count fish that were coming into port. The problem is there are no marinas on the Potomac River. You're dealing with the geography of where the boats land. There's really no way to control a number for the Potomac River. Secondly, in 2015, the disaster bell is going to ring. If you want to have a survey, you need to latch onto Maryland and Virginia and identify where the fish came from. He feels there's no way we can consider changing allocations around when ASMFC is going to adjust targets in a year. The main thing is conservation and how we deal with preserving and protecting what's there rather than fishing out the entire quota.

Mr. Crabbe, who is a charter boat captain, stated since 2005, they take fewer trips each year. The economy in the last three years has put a killing on the charter boat industry.

Thomas Crowder, Sr. suggested having charter boat captains report their catch to start building a database. This will give you an idea of how many fish are being caught by that fishery.

Elgin Nininger felt that it depends on the area where you are fishing. He says there are a lot of little fish and he doesn't know how you would go about obtaining the data, but knows that that middle river is a good area to survey. He feels that if there is quota that is not being utilized he

would like to see some of that shifted to the commercial fishery, however he does not want to penalize the recreational fishery in any way. He suggested doing this for one year and take a look at it and see how things turned out and if it should continue or be moved around again.

Chairman Brown stated the recreational fish that are being caught in the river are being accounted for. It might not be the best system and it isn't the best system, because we don't have the type of data that we need to figure out this situation.

Commissioner William Rice suggested having staff survey the customers that come into the office to purchase licenses and try to gather data that way. Unfortunately, it would be a small amount of customers, but some data could be collected and it's a start. Mr. Gary stated the survey Mr. Rice is talking about conducting may be in conflict with NOAA and he's not sure they would accept that data. Kyle Schick stated we could use the data collected simply for internal purposes.

Commissioner Fleming stated if you weren't around before 1990 to 1994, this was a very contentious issue that was discussed in great lengths in the wee hours of the morning when quotas and allocations were being established. The allocations that are in place now are what resulted from those meetings. If you recall, tags were issued for the recreational fishery and reporting was mandatory. Then the fishing and interest slacked off and the quota wasn't being met. Years later, we realized that only five to fifteen percent of the quota was being caught annually for what was allocated. It quickly made sense to eliminate the need for mandatory reporting and it was very clear that there was no way we were even coming close to exceeding the allocation that was allowed. It's a long history and if you want to argue as to why the recreational fishermen are not catching the fish, we can sit here until 2 a.m. trying to figure that out. If you decide to change allocations, the next Commission meeting will be filled to capacity and then some, because he doesn't think that will go over very well. This is a very complex issue and no one really knows what is being caught in the Potomac River. The effort is way down and there are a whole lot of reasons for that.

Chairman Brown stated he would like to see the committee make some form of a motion dealing with this issue. He would like to see a motion made that we don't want to see anything jeopardized in the sport fishing industry, but since there are 526,000 pounds of fish that are not being harvested, we request the Commission transfer some of these fish to the commercial fishery on a one year basis to see what happens. If a bunch of people come to complain based on lack of data, then maybe it will force a system to be created that actually works.

A motion was made by Thomas Lewis and seconded by Harry Boyden to reallocate 20% of the recreational quota to the commercial fishery for one year in 2014.

Bob Bowes asked what happens if the recreational harvesters exceed their quota because of the reallocation, and who is going to give up their fish and take the penalty if this happens? He understands this has never happened, but we have to be prepared for it either way. Mr. Schick responded no one will ever know because the allocation goes to Maryland and Virginia as to what is caught. So all we are using is historical data to show that the Potomac River recreational

fishery never catches their quota. If that happens, it will never show up in the data unless Maryland and Virginia go over their recreational catches, which doesn't happen.

Mr. Pharis stated the charter boat captains are at risk of getting penalized because that data is available in Maryland. Mr. Gary responded he doesn't see that happening.

Mr. Crowder suggested leaving this issue alone.

Commissioner Fleming questioned is the historical data good or bad. Did the data include the amount of poaching that took place a couple years ago? The only reason the poaching was uncovered was because there was a Federal bust that was reportedly millions of pounds. The recreational data is garbage and we assume it's good. We assume the data is 100 percent accurate, but no one knows what the numbers are. Did the PRFC account for the pounds of fish that were poached in the commercial catch? Mr. Schick replied the poaching is being calculated in the quotas through Maryland and Virginia.

Commissioner Rice stated he was involved in dividing up the allocations years ago. When the moratorium was lifted and the quota system was implemented, fishing was easy back then and the fish were plentiful. As time progressed, the activity slowed down and it wasn't due to lack of fish, it was due to lack of interest in the fishery. He stated the committee's job to him as a Commissioner, is to adjust to the change in times, and that exactly what you are trying to do right now, so carry on.

Chairman Brown stated we are just an advisory committee. We advise the Commission as to what we would like to see. The Commission then reviews all issues and makes a decision based on that.

Chairman Brown called for vote to the motion and the motion failed with 6 in favor, 7 opposed and 1 abstention.

2014 PRFC Striped Bass Quotas

At the last committee meeting the committee requested information be provided to them concerning the striped bass quotas by gears for the last five years, the amount left over each of the last five years, what part of the season is the gill net quota generally exceeded and how is the average size of fish calculated for each gear.

Mrs. Cosby presented two tables she had prepared for the committee. The first table showed how the striped bass quotas are broken down into commercial, recreational and charter, and then further divided into specific gear types. It also included information pertaining to the calculations for number of tags by gear and average size/weight of fish. The second table presented historical landings data from 1991 to the present. It showed that from 2010 to 2012 the gill net fishery exceeded its quota, but the overall commercial quota was not exceeded. The only years the overall quota was exceeded was in 1991 and 2004. The average size/weight of fish harvested was also included the second table for each specific gear type.

Commissioner Fleming stated that each year the hook and line fishery has never come close to reaching its quota, is that because there was no effort? According to the chart the hook and line fishery never caught their quota and each year only harvested about five to ten percent of their quota, just like recreational fishermen. Joe Nelson responded that fishermen may be trying to wait to catch bigger fish that never got caught. The effort was there but it just didn't happen.

Mr. Wicker suggested moving the opening of the hook and line striped bass season to January instead of February. In January, you have a better market and a better chance to catch larger fish. Mr. Schick felt hook and liners would not be in competition with the gill netters and agreed the market would be better in January.

A motion was made by Kenneth Wicker, seconded by Elgin Nininger to recommend looking at a January hook and line season.

Mrs. Cosby advised that any change in the hook and line season would need approval from ASMFC and that would not take place for the 2014 season.

Chairman Brown called the vote and the motion passed unanimously.

Order 2013-11 – 2013-2014 Gill Net Season and Restrictions & Commercial Striped Bass Catch and Size Limit

Mrs. Cosby explained that this Order updates the 2013-2014 commercial striped bass gill net quota. We need to adjust this because the overall quota was slightly increased by ASMFC. **A motion was made by Kenneth Wicker, seconded by James Bowling to recommend the adoption of the Order as presented. The motion passed unanimously.**

Order 2014-01 – 2014 Recreational and Charter Striped Bas Seasons and Restrictions

Mrs. Cosby explained this Order is to update calendar changes and quotas for the 2014 recreational and charter striped bass seasons.

Mr. Duby asked if the PRFC has any policy in place for large fishing tournaments. He is concerned with the effect that these tournaments have on large female fish during the spawning season and big tournaments just kill them. The second issue he is concerned about is catch and release prior to the formal start of the season. We kill too many fish that way as well. These are just thoughts for further discussion that may need to be added to the Order later. Mrs. Cosby stated that barbless hooks are required when fishing for striped bass during the closed season. Mr. Duby replied that barbless hooks will still traumatize fish, especially during the spawning season. Chairman Brown explained that whoever holds the tournaments decides where fishermen can fish. Mr. Duby noted that it is not a policy from the Commission, because we work from a quota system. Mrs. Cosby added that tournament participants have to abide by our licensing requirements, seasons, size and creel limits. Mr. Duby expressed they are his concerns and he feels this comes down to conservation and we have to protect the fish.

A motion was made by Jeffrey Pharis, seconded by Martin Duby to recommend the adoption of Order 2014-01 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Order 2014-02 – 2014 Commercial Striped Bass Catch Limits and Restrictions

Mrs. Cosby explained this is to update the commercial striped bass gear quotas as a result of the increase from ASMFC.

A motion was made by Thomas Lewis, seconded by Elgin Nininger to recommend the adoption of Order 2014-02 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

American Eel – ASMFC Addendum III

Mr. Gary advised that ASMFC implemented restrictions on American Eel, across all life stages, to reduce fishing mortality. The main one that would affect the eel fishery in the Potomac River would deal with increasing the minimum size limit for the yellow eel fishery. The states are moving towards quota based management. In order to achieve the reduction, the Board at ASMFC approved Addendum III in August 2013 which implemented a nine-inch minimum size limit for the commercial and recreational yellow eel fishery, gear restrictions for the commercial eel fishery, and a decrease to the recreational creel limit.

Mrs. Cosby advised that in addition to the increased size limit, there will also be a season closure for fyke nets and pound nets from September 1st through December 31st.

Order 2014-03 – 2014 Recreational and Charter Fishing Season, Size and Catch Limits

Mrs. Cosby advised that this Order adjusts the recreational and charter American Eel size and creel limits in accordance to requirements in ASMFC Addendum III.

A motion was made by Jeffrey Pharis, seconded by Kenneth Wicker to recommend the adoption of Order 2014-03 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Order 2014-04 – 2014 Commercial Fishing Season, Size and Catch Limits

Mrs. Cosby advised this Order adjusts the commercial eel size limits as previously discussed.

A motion was made by Kenneth Wicker, seconded by Elgin Nininger to recommend the adoption of Order 2014-04 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Order 2014-05 – Seasonal Closure for American Eels

Mrs. Cosby Advised this Order implements no taking of eels in the fall for fyke nets and pound nets.

A motion was made by Harry Boyden, seconded by Elgin Nininger to recommend the adoption of Order 2014-05 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Spanish Mackerel – ASMFC Addendum I allows seasonal exemption from 12” minimum size limit during July & September 2014

Mrs. Cosby explained that under ASMFC Addendum I, there was an alternative size limit pilot program created to alleviate the issue of dead discards from pound nets during the summer. States may establish a seasonal exemption from the current minimum size limit of 12” fork length to 11 ½” fork length. The size limit change would apply only to commercial pound net fisheries during the months of July through September. The intent of the proposed measure is to reduce and/or eliminate seasonal regulatory discards. A state must inform the ASMFC of its management program if it participates in the pilot program. The pilot program will be effective for the 2013 and 2014 fishing years only.

Mrs. Cosby apologized that this option was not provided to the committee for consideration for 2013, but staff is providing this information now for consideration for the 2014 season. She explained that the Potomac River does not recognize fork length measurements for the commercial fishery. Currently the Spanish Mackerel size limit for the commercial fishery is 14” total length and this correlates to the 12” fork length set by ASMFC. This pilot program amounts to a half-inch seasonal exemption. Therefore the minimum size limit would be 13 ½” for Spanish Mackerel for pound nets during July through September, 2014 if you are interested. If you want to recommend this, a motion would need to be made and forwarded to the Commission for approval.

Chairman Fleming asked what the landings are for Spanish Mackerel in the Potomac River. Mrs. Cosby stated the landings are very minimal. Chairman Brown stated he has spoken to the pound netters and he feels it’s not an issue to them. **There was no motion made on this issue.**

Report on the Menhaden Quota

Mrs. Cosby presented a graph showing the menhaden landings for 2013. She reminded the committee that 99 percent of the menhaden harvest is taken with pound nets. Working with the pound netters, staff was able to implement a weekly call-in program once 70 percent of the catch limit was reached. By tracking the harvest, it was determined that 70 percent of the catch limit was reached on July 15th, 90 percent reached on August 17th and 100 percent was reached on August 27th. On August 22, 2013 the menhaden fishery was closed to all gear and a 6,000 pound daily by-catch allowance for pound nets went into effect. By using this call-in program to help track the harvest, PRFC did not exceed the catch limit established by ASMFC.

Mr. Wicker questioned if the gill netters would be receiving a by-catch allowance. He is concerned with jurisdictional transport of menhaden if there’s no by-catch for gill netters.

Mr. Gary advised that the committee is more than welcome to make a motion or recommendation; however if we were to expand this to another fishery, we would have to go to ASMFC for approval prior to implementation. The current by-catch limit is specifically for the pound net fishery. There seemed to be some confusion on that based on general discussions between the audience and the committee.

Commissioner Ida Hall stated that she was told by Commissioner Jack Travelstead that in Virginia, once the menhaden fishery closed there would be a 6,000 pound by-catch in the gill net fishery. She catches menhaden for bait to use in her crab pots. Mrs. Cosby responded that PRFC interpreted ASMFC's directive on this issue that the by-catch was for pound nets only. Mr. Schick stated this issue of by-catch in other gears will be discussed next year at ASMFC.

Chairman Brown advised Mr. Gary that when this issue comes up at ASMFC next year, that he should take into consideration that we do need a by-catch for all of the net fisheries.

Invasive Blue Catfish Update

Mrs. Cosby advised that the bay-wide implementation team is working on different items and they assigned an invasive catfish task force to develop a plan for catfish. It is currently being developed and discussions are taking place related to catfish issues. They have developed an ecosystem model with environmental drivers and are looking at seasonal dynamics. There is a lot of research going on dealing with tagging, predation and other studies within the jurisdictions. Discussions are continuing on marketing strategies for blue catfish. Staff will advise you of the progress of this invasive task force.

Wayne France asked the committee to search for some grant funding and request the Commission look into establishing a catfish processing plant somewhere in the area. He noted that Mike Hutt (VA Marine Products Board) stated at the last Commission meeting that there is more of a market for wild caught catfish than farm raised. There are a lot of catfish being caught and having a processing plant would help move the fillets, as well as help the fishermen.

Mr. Gary explained that this may be a time consuming process, but is something we could look into with direction from the Commission. He stated he's supportive of the request.

Chairman Brown stated there's a decent market out there, but the problem is getting the catfish processed. He knows there is a market for it and we need to understand that these fish are feeding on anything and everything and it's affecting the other species. He felt it would be a move in the right direction to get this going.

A motion was made by Danny Crabbe, seconded by Elgin Nininger to recommend the Commission pursue a grant to research the possibility of opening a catfish processing plant. The motion passed unanimously.

Update on Artificial Reef Activity in the Potomac River

Mr. Gary advised that Hogg Island and Kitts Point have been designated as areas to use for the artificial reef program. Former Commissioner Bob Bowes was very instrumental in advancing the development of Kitts Point. Just when we were about to start moving material to Kitts Point, we found out that our permit from the Army Corps of Engineers had expired. We have been working with them to have the permit reissued. During the permit review process, the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) requested that side-scan surveys and magnetometer surveys be done to make sure there are no archeological findings in the area. The MHT has agreed to conduct the

survey themselves and should be doing that very soon. Once we have the report from the scans, we should receive the permit based on those findings. Once the permit is issued, weather pending, we will place the materials placed on Kitts Point. We just have to see how things work out. This is an ongoing process that we are working on. Mrs. Cosby added that the material is being donated and the Commission is paying to have the materials transported and deposited on the reef.

Sport Fishing License Fees

Mr. Gary advised at the September Commission meeting, the Commission voted to advertise for public hearing a possible increase sport fishing license fees. At the June Commission meeting, Roger Trageser (Maryland Bass Nation) spoke on a fairness issue related to the cost of recreational licenses between the three jurisdictions. He felt that individuals were taking advantage of the cheaper PRFC \$10 sport fishing license, and based on reciprocity agreements, were using our license in Maryland waters. Ultimately, he believed it may have a fiscal impact on Maryland sport fishing license revenue. The Commission decided to hold a public hearing on a new sport fishing license structure to accommodate similar licenses available in Maryland and Virginia. It would create resident and non-resident individual and pleasure boat licenses and a ten-day short-term individual sport fishing license. This will be part of the public hearing scheduled for the December Commission meeting.

Mr. Gary explained that Ricky from RW Sports Shop (PRFC licensing agent) commented if we increase the license fees, he would like to see the PRFC sport fishing licenses be issued for one-year from the date-of-purchase instead of a calendar year. Currently Virginia is on a one-year from date-of-purchase schedule, but Maryland is on a calendar year. Upon speaking with our computer programmer, this would take a lot of work to convert our licensing system to a one-year from date of purchase.

Mr. Schick, who sells both PRFC and Virginia licenses, said he sees virtually no change as to which license he sells throughout the year. He feels it's this way because the PRFC license is cheaper. He doesn't see any urgency to change the license to a one-year from date-of-purchase license. It's not a big concern right now.

Mr. Gary stated that one issue that has not been discussed with the Commission yet is the agent commissions. In Maryland and Virginia, agents are paid \$1.00 for each license sold across the board. The Commission currently pays \$0.75 for the individual license and \$1.50 for the pleasure boat license. This is also something that will need to be considered if the sport licenses are restructured.

Mr. Duby felt we should standardize as much as we can.

A motion was made by Martin Duby, seconded by Michael Meier to recommend that sport licenses remain on a calendar year basis.

Mr. Bowes stated that MD Delegate Woods attended a Commission meeting last year and noted that PRFC managed and kept track of their funding and what funds were used for. He also made

the comment of how poorly Maryland managed their funds. The PRFC, under the guidance of AC Carpenter has done a masterful job in the accounting of all funds and how they are used. With regards to sport fishing license fees, we all know that they account for a large portion of the funding for the PRFC and the overall budget. To change the license structure and fees to satisfy the desires of Maryland is a big disservice to the Commission. He feels the Commission should not cater to what Maryland wants if it's going to be its own independent fisheries management system. The current system we have now works and we should keep it in place.

Mr. Schick stated when he was on the Commission, he did not agree with raising the fee structure either unless Maryland agreed to provide more funding in the way of appropriations to the Commission. Commissioner O'Connell did state at the last Commission meeting, that if it did start affecting the revenue of the Commission, they would come up with some more money. Mr. Schick is not sure if Maryland would follow through with this and would like to either see the money first or some type of guarantee. PRFC's budget is very tight and we can't risk losing any revenue. Mr. Bowes agreed with Mr. Schick, and stated four years ago, the PRFC was getting \$175,000 from each state in appropriations and now it's on the order of \$145,000 from each state. The Commission needs that money from recreational license fees to make up for the lack of funding from the states.

James Bowling stated that originally to fish in the Potomac River, you had to have a Potomac River sport fishing license. When the reciprocal agreements were made, he remembered Mr. Carpenter saying that the Commission would not sell any licenses if the prices were the same as in Maryland. Having the convenience to go on-line or into a Walmart to purchase a Maryland license will certainly take away revenue from watermen who fish on the Potomac River. If we go back to the same pricing as the states, the PRFC will most certainly lose money.

The committee asked how much revenue is generated from sport license sales. Commissioner Fleming responded approximately \$160,000 for recreational, \$130,000 for commercial, \$140,000 from each state for appropriations and NOAA provides a \$90,000 grant.

Mr. Gary stated some of this was discussed at the September Commission meeting, but no one really knows how much potential revenue could be lost. He advised that when Maryland increased its recreational fees in 1994, he doesn't recall any type of decrease in funding that took place. He noted that Commissioners O'Connell and Travelstead were both supportive of equity and fairness for all jurisdictions.

Mrs. Cosby advised that in 2011 the Commission raised the sport fishing license fees from \$7.50 to \$10 for an individual and from \$30 to \$40 for pleasure boats.

Mr. Duby noted his motion that is on the table doesn't have anything to do with increasing license fees and he would like to address that motion.

Chairman Brown called for the vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Fleming questioned with no disrespect to the Finfish Advisory Committee, but asked why this issue was presented to them if the Commission has already advertised it for

public hearing. He stated this is really for information purposes only and no motions really need to be made on this.

Advisory Committee Vacancies

There were several members' terms that are due to expire March 31, 2014. Of the committee members that were present today, James Bowling, George Willett, Jr., Kenneth Wicker and Michael Meier all agreed to serve another term. Currently there is a vacancy for a Maryland At-Large recreational fisherman to serve on the committee.

New Business

Mr. Nininger questioned if we can find out how to go about being able to sell snakeheads in Virginia. Chairman Brown asked Mr. Gary to speak with Virginia officials to find out what needs to be done. Mr. Gary stated he would find out the process and what needs to be done.

Mr. France asked if anyone is trying to find out what has happened to the crabs. We need to look out for ourselves. Mr. Gary stated the Chesapeake Bay Program will be providing an extensive presentation on crabs and will hopefully answer some of his concerns at their next meeting.

Mr. Bowes felt that although the licensing information was brought to the committee for informational purposes, he felt it was appropriate that the committee take a stand on it and forward a recommendation to the Commission.

A motion was made by Jeffrey Pharis, seconded by Michael Meier to recommend that the license fees be left as they are now. The motion passed with 13 in favor and 1 abstention.

Mr. Schick stated he is no longer on the Commission, but serves on the ASMFC Striped Bass Advisory Panel as a representative for the PRFC. He advised that any concerns that the committee may have regarding striped bass can be brought to him and he will try to help in any way possible by forwarding the information on.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert T. Brown, Chairman