

**FINFISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**October 7, 2014**  
**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 G. Willett – MD Recreational Fisherman  
Russell A. Sullivan – MD Recreational Fisherman  
Martin H. Duby – MD Recreational Fisherman  
Thomas L. Lewis – Northumberland Comm. Fisherman  
Kenneth Wicker – Westmoreland Comm. Fisherman  
Arthur L. Loving – Commercial Fisherman Upper River  
Jeff Schenemann – Commercial Fisherman Upper River  
Michael E. Meier – VA Recreational Fisherman  
Paul Downey – VA Recreational Fisherman

**Commissioners Present**

Dennis C. Fleming

**Support Staff Present**

Martin Gary – PRFC Staff  
Cathy Friend – PRFC Staff

**Members Absent**

Dandridge Crabbe – VA Charter Boat Captain

**Press**

None

**Others Present:**

Elgin Nininger– Crab Advisory Committee; Dean Nininger, John Dean, Dusty Remington and several others who did not sign the guest register.

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Gary advised that Vice-chairman Steve Scala had to resign due to family issues which prevented him from being able to devote the time needed to the Finfish Advisory Committee.

**Review and Discuss Options for Draft Addendum IV to Amendment VI of the Interstate Fisheries Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass**

Mr. Gary stated discussion will take place at ASMFC Striped Bass Board meeting in about three weeks. This is the most significant management change to the striped bass fishery since the moratorium was lifted. Public hearings were held around the area and PRFC’s public hearing was held on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. He advised tonight the committee needs to review these critical options and make any recommendations to forward to the Commission. He is specifically looking for a formal motion in reference to the timeline of implementation. Mr. Gary announced that he wanted the recommendations to be clear and concise and his plan is to forward them to the Commission as soon as possible so they have them to review prior to the ASMFC meeting. The next step is the Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions, including DC, are meeting here at the PRFC office before the ASMFC meeting. The objective of this meeting is to analyze all the feedback and try to gather some consistency before going into the ASMFC meeting. Our goal is to blend this all together in hopes of being somewhat consistent from a regulatory perspective across all the jurisdictions. Mr. Gary then started to review the options as follows:

2.5.1 – Coastwide Population Reference Point Options – Mr. Gary advised this is basically the timeline reference. He explained there is normally an option for status quo or an option to adopt the benchmark stock assessment reference points, which changed. He doesn't see a need to make a motion on this because everyone is going to accept the reference points from the last stock assessment. What this does is drop the reference points and lower the points for spawning stock biomass to be more conservative for fishing mortality and that's where these cut backs are coming from.

2.5.2 – Chesapeake Bay Stock Reference Point Options

Option A – Status Quo – This means we would not change from last year. We could make the argument that the Bay jurisdictions fish on a largely male fishery, and by reducing by any amount proportionately to what's happening on the coast isn't really going to help the female population in the Bay. Also, the Bay jurisdictions have been using a harvest control model to dictate what the quotas are going to be each year. It's more or less worked pretty well and we've been in compliance 19 out of 20 years. So the argument is why don't the bay jurisdictions stay status quo until new Chesapeake Bay reference points are established. Mr. Gary plans to bring that point up at the jurisdictional meeting. He asked the committee if there was any opposition to the committee putting a motion forward for the three jurisdictions go to ASMFC and request to stay status quo until new Chesapeake Bay reference points are developed.

Martin Duby stated if that could be done, it would be great.

Chairman Brown stated that is the position we should take since we got into this situation because ASMFC changed the benchmark that we've been using since the moratorium was lifted. We've also been going by the young-of-year (YOY) class data. We no longer have a reference point for the Chesapeake Bay, and the sex ratio according to the scientific information, shows 70 to 94 percent of the harvest is male. So catching male fish is not going to help the female spawning stock. The female spawning stock is what they are concerned with and that is a coastal problem.

Mr. Gary stated to make this a productive exercise, the priorities to focus on include the three options: the one year 25 percent reduction, the three year 17 percent reduction, and the 7, 7, 7 percent reduction over a three year phase in. Chairman Brown stated he would like to go with status quo as the preferred option based on the reasons he just explained. Plus we should be getting a boost in our quota because of the large 2011 year class and if it wasn't for this our quota would be going up this year. It went up about 14 percent last year and we were supposed to get a larger increase this coming year based on the harvest control model.

Martin Duby stated if you go with the status quo, doesn't that beg to stay with the three year reduction because the data is somewhat inadequate. So why take your head off in one year, if over a period of time you've got the ability to adjust to possibly a more reasonable number. If you stay close to that current number and go down to the 7 percent for three years, isn't that driven by the data and doesn't that influence the risk you take between one and three years.

Mr. Gary explained that what they are saying is that all three options essentially achieve the same outcome. Mr. Duby stated if you are uncertain about the quality of the data, then it would

make sense to do that. Mr. Gary stated this is a data rich species and he doesn't think anyone will say they are uncertain about the data. A better way to put this is to have another run at a motion that was made previously to essentially do that same thing until bay specific reference points are developed. A motion was made and it failed 7 to 9. Chairman Brown stated it needs to be brought back up again, even if we don't get it.

Mr. Gary advised that we wouldn't be working under the harvest control model, we would be "frozen" as status quo. Chairman Brown agreed and said freeze it until we get the reference points. He recommends staying at status quo because ASMFC has changed the bench mark stock assessment, which got us into this problem and now we don't have reference points.

**A motion was made by Chairman Brown, seconded by Thomas Lewis to recommend that bay jurisdictions stay status quo until Chesapeake Bay specific reference points are developed, which status quo means "frozen" at 2014 levels.**

Kenneth Wicker explained we have already been protecting the spawning females in this area because we're closed down when the bulk of them get here. It's been established for years and we are getting extra penalties put on us. Mr. Wicker stated the PRFC has established guidelines to protect the spawning fish years ago. He is supportive of the motion, but the only problem is we are grouped in with Virginia and Maryland.

Elgin Nininger felt there are plenty of restrictions in place such as mesh sizes, maximum size limits and length of net allowed to be set. That situation is entirely different than on the coast.

Paul Downey came in late and Mr. Gary caught him up to speed on the discussion.

Mr. Gary explained that the recreational sector has been vocal in both Maryland and Virginia. Dennis Fleming was the only one who spoke up at the PRFC public hearing for the recreational sector and he said they want the 25 percent cut in one year. Commissioner Fleming remarked the reason he stated the 25 percent cut in one year for recreational fishermen is because recreational fishermen may have trouble understanding complicated rules. If you seek a three year phase in of different regulations, it would just be confusing for recreational fishermen.

Chairman Brown stated the 25 percent cut is misleading, because you are getting cut 25 percent for three years consistently.

Commissioner Fleming stated the commercial sector at the ASMFC public hearing advocated for the 7 percent for three years and the recreational fishermen were more for the 25 percent reduction. We keep talking about 70 to 90 percent of the harvest being male and he questioned if we are any closer to knowing if that is fact or not. Mr. Gary replied we haven't and he gave his word that before the fisheries managers meet, he will have that information for the Commissioners to review. Mr. Gary noted that Maryland brought up the theory of resident fish being skewed towards males. He asked for information as to where this data is coming from and is hearing that the data is not supported by ASMFC.

Commissioner Fleming commented that there was a recent study conducted where striped bass were tagged with radio devices using new technology, and receivers were placed throughout the Chesapeake Bay and scientists are able to track the fish. This latest report showed information that was contrary to what we've ever known about striped bass. There were 28 fish tagged in the Potomac River and over time, 27 of them migrated out of the river and up into the Chesapeake Bay instead of out to the ocean. We have yet to receive any additional information on those fish and what became of them.

**Chairman Brown called for the vote on the motion and it passed with 13 in favor and 1 opposed.**

#### 2.6 Timeline to Reduce F to the Target

Mr. Gary explained out of the last stock assessment, and because of the lack of recruitment, the models are projecting the spawning stock biomass to drop below the critical threshold. The stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, but both the fishing mortality and the spawning stock biomass are headed in the wrong direction because of weak recruitment (other than the 2011 year class). The models are suggesting the spawning stock biomass is going to trip the target. Therefore, the board is considering these timelines of reductions, so by reducing mortality we bump up the spawning stock biomass over time. All the options accomplish the same thing and that is to get us to the target F that will increase the spawning stock biomass. The 25 percent reduction will get you there faster than the 17 percent and the 7 percent over three years, but all three will achieve the goal. He suggested reviewing the options for the timeline target.

25 Percent Reduction – Reducing F to its target in one year with a 25 percent reduction in 2013 harvest in 2015. For the recreational and charter fishery, harvest is reduced by adjusting the bag, size, slot and trophy size limits.

17 Percent Reduction – Reducing F to its target within three years with a 17 percent reduction in 2013 harvest in 2015 and it stays in place until another addendum changes it. More than likely these implementations will be in place a minimum of three to four years.

7% Reduction – Reducing F to its target within three years with a 7 percent sequential reduction in harvest for three consecutive years starting in 2015.

Mr. Gary stated the committee needs to discuss these options and make a recommendation if they so choose.

Mr. Downey verified that the 25 percent and the 17 percent will be for 2015 and will remain in effect until another addendum changes it. The 7 percent will be for the next three years and will stay at 7 percent until another addendum changes it. Mr. Gary stated the way this plan is written, we are going to reduce by 25 or 17 percent and it stays there until ASMFC changes it.

Chairman Brown asked for Mr. Gary to show the table that shows what the 7 percent reduction does over the next three years. He is in favor of the 7 percent for three years because if ASMFC comes up with the reference points a year from now, then we will have the type of information

we need to make a sound decision. Once we get the reference points, we can go back and have it reviewed. Mr. Duby feels the 7 percent reduction ties more to the status quo option, and that is our priority in terms of delaying the impact until the reference points are developed.

Mr. Gary explained the technical committee has already been charged with working on Chesapeake Bay reference points, but we don't know when they will be completed. Once they are done, another amendment would be created and it would separate us from the coast wide reference points.

Chairman Brown stated we should have our own plan for the Chesapeake Bay, just like Albemarle Sound. We have a completely different fishery here and we should look at a multi-species management instead of just one fish at a time and that is no way to manage a fishery for any type of business.

Commissioner Fleming felt if we think in three years ASMFC is going to come back with something earth shattering, then don't hold your breath. Mr. Duby said then you should take something that will work like the 7 percent or we do something more dramatic like the 25 percent, which is inconsistent with the status quo priority. Commissioner Fleming stated PRFC is one of seventeen votes that will go before ASMFC and he feels the 25 percent reduction will be put into place and they will get to where they want to be it's just how they arrive there is the question. Chairman Brown explained that asking for status quo gets our message out there, then we can let them know that we will agree to the 7 percent reduction. The 25 and 17 percent reductions are out of the question because of the economic impact, plus we don't have the reference points. Commissioner Fleming agreed and what Chairman Brown is saying is more rational and realistic.

Jeffrey Pharis noted that on the 7 percent for three years option, there's no trophy fish impact and asked how that would work. Mr. Gary explained Virginia doesn't have a trophy fishery and Maryland has done the analysis. What they are looking at is adjusting the season start date or the creel limit. The feedback from Maryland is that the charter community values days, so they wants as many days as they can possibly fish. In order to accomplish that they have to sacrifice the minimum size limit. The last analysis indicates they are going to have to go with a 34" or 35" minimum size limit. It's unlikely that there will be anything less than a 34" minimum size limit. Your trophy fishery will not have a lot of variability.

Chairman Brown stated he would like to get some of these options out of the way and asked what the committee thought about the 25 percent option.

Mr. Downey stated he is not a charter boat captain and he likes to fish for himself. He noted we have three options and he can't support the 25 percent because it would be too hard on the watermen that do this for a living, but he wonders if the 7 percent for three years is enough. Is this committee being driven by the corporate or business side of things too much? Are we not looking at the recreational side and what it has to bring to the table for our local economy? He is representing Potomac River anglers. Chairman Brown stated we are far more superior than we were back in the day. As long as you have small fish, you will have fish to catch. That was not

discussed as much as it should have been. If we look at the YOY index, you can see that there are enough small fish out there right now to sustain the fishery.

Mr. Downey explained there are people out there catching fish and among the recreational community, the feeling is that things aren't good. So that is what is causing this swell of support for the maximum reduction. He understands the idea of going for the minimum restrictions if it was his occupation. Recreational fishermen bring an incalculable boom to these areas where fishing goes on and their voice should be heard that we are in favor of a cut. We agree that it shouldn't be 25 percent, but it needs to be more than the minimum; therefore, he would support the middle of the road.

Commissioner Fleming noted that none of the charts presented account for natural mortality.

Larry Crowder stated twenty years ago the water quality was nothing like it is today. The water quality now is extreme and people are dying from it.

**A motion was made by Jeffrey Pharis, seconded by Russell Sullivan to recommend Option D the reduction of 7 percent for the next three years. The motion passed with 13 in favor and 1 opposed.**

Mr. Gary noted that Mr. Downey had extensive dialog on his position in terms of what his preference was as a recreational angler, and that Mr. Duby has a slightly different opinion and is supportive of a phased in approach and doesn't necessarily want to take that whole lump sum. As the vocal minority, he asked Mr. Downey what his preference would be if he didn't vote for the 7 percent over three years. Mr. Downey stated he would support the 17 percent reduction as the recreational representative.

Mr. Gary explained that originally there was only one option to reduce from the 2013 quota. Maryland, seconded by Virginia, added a second option to the plan that would offer the opportunity to make these reductions from the 2012 harvest levels. That is an important distinction because the bay jurisdictions have been fishing on this harvest control model that goes up and down with the recruited biomass at 18". As we discussed tonight, we had partial recruitment of the 2011 year class in 2014 so our quota went up 14 percent from 2013. In the plan originally, the reductions would come from 2013 quota. The motion that was made was to take it from the 2012 harvest data because if we took it from the quota, we felt like that would be inappropriate and unfair. The harvest for 2012 is a little less than the quota, but it's more of a quota than the 2013 quota. He asked the committee if they wanted to take these reductions from the 2013 quota which is a lower figure or from the 2012 harvest. He advised the overall cut is going to be larger if you go with the 2013 quota instead of the 2012 harvest.

**A motion was made by Thomas Lewis, seconded by Russell Sullivan to take the reduction from the 2012 harvest.**

Mr. Gary stated he believes it is inevitable after all the dust settles at ASMFC, that whatever quota is set for the Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions, there will be a meeting between them to decide on allocations. The original allocation scheme that's been in place since 1995 is that Maryland

gets 52 percent, Virginia 32+ percent and PRFC 15+ percent. Virginia has already expressed concern with the allocation numbers and they are asking for it to be reviewed. Whatever is decided here, it could potentially become smaller if the allocations are adjusted. If that discussion takes place, it is going to be a public process.

Mr. Downey stated if we chose to go with the lower poundage amount meaning the 2013 quota, that there could be a correlation between us getting a reduction overall. Mr. Gary explained that regardless of the reduction, Virginia wants to have the discussion about allocations.

James Bowling explained 2013 was a low year and this year is already back to 2012 numbers, so if you go with 2013 harvest numbers you've already taken a cut from where we're at. If you go back and use 2012 harvest numbers, we're closer to where we are right now when we take the reduction.

**Chairman Brown called for the vote and with 14 in favor, the motion passed unanimously.**

Chesapeake Bay Management Area Recreational Fishery (MD, PRFC and VA would implement)

Mr. Gary reviewed the options and noted that D2 is closest to what we have in place now. This is assuming ASMFC votes for the 7 percent reduction for three years. Mr. Pharis questioned if D2 is approved, would we ever see an 18" minimum size fish again. Mr. Gary stated you wouldn't; it would go to 19" then to 20" and stay at 20" unless there is another addendum to change it. Mr. Pharis stated if this is dealing with recreational, will the commercial size limit stay at 18". Mr. Gary replied it has been discussed, and we don't have an absolute answer on that, but the bay jurisdictional managers do need to further discuss that. It came up at the Maryland public hearing with concerns for the hook and line fishery.

Martin Duby asked about the law enforcement issues with different size limits between the jurisdictions. Mr. Gary explained that becomes a transit issue and should not be a concern. Our goal is to try to be uniform between the jurisdictions. Chairman Brown stated once we leave the 18" minimum size limit, we'll probably never see it again.

Mr. Gary stated the question here is to decide if we like D2 or should we consider a slot limit, which would be option D3. He stated the committee does not have to offer feedback here, but it is preferred. Mr. Gary explained assuming the 7 percent for three years is adopted, the next step they will do are the recreational options and hopefully the bay jurisdictions will agree on D2. There are three options here to choose from. D2 is the closest to what we have now with a 19" minimum to a 20" minimum thereafter and that will provide some protection for the 2011 year class. D3 deals with slot limits and D4 deals with quotas. There was general discussion among the committee about the option of D3 and slot limits. They were concerned with the fall fishery and felt no one would fish if this was adopted.

Chairman Brown stated he was not in favor of the slot limits, but noted that in 2017 the slot limit would be 18" to 24", and asked what would the ocean size limits be? Mr. Gary explained it would be 32" for the coast. Chairman Brown stated they are wanting to save the spawning stock

but that's what the ocean is fishing on, yet we are supposed to tell our recreational fishermen they can't catch anything over a 24" fish. It's not right.

Mr. Pharis questioned if you reduced the number of days from an overall recreational standpoint, how could you get to the quota on the 7 percent reduction for three years by reducing the number of days at the end of the year? Mr. Gary stated that's not an option presented unless the committee wants to add it. Mr. Bowling stated he sees that as option D4 because the quota is reducing each year, but the size limit remains at 18". Mr. Gary advised the committee not to go down that road because it could put you in a potential scenario where you could overfish the quota.

Mr. Pharis stated most fishermen in the summer are catching an 18" fish. If the minimum size limit is increased to 20", that will remove all those folks that fish during the summer. He would be in favor of D2 from a recreational standpoint, because it has the least impact on the things recreational fishermen do. He definitely does not like D3 because that shuts down the whole fall fishery for charter boats and recreational fishing.

**A motion was made by Martin Duby, seconded by Michael Meier to recommend option D2 for the Chesapeake Bay Management Area Recreational Fishery. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Option D2:** Size limit changes with corresponding implementation year are shown below.

Year	Bag Limit	Size limit	Trophy fish	% reduction
2015	2	19" min	n/a	Approximately a 22% reduction from 2013 harvest over three years
2016	2	20" min	n/a	
2017	2	20" min	n/a	

Mr. Gary stated the committee just captured what the recommendations were for the commercial and recreational fishery. He noted the committee's first preference is to remain status quo at the current 2014 harvest levels until specific Chesapeake Bay reference points are adopted. If that does not transpire, the committee's next preference is a phased in approach of a 7 percent reduction for three years, taken from the 2012 harvest levels and the recreational charter sector would approve option D2.

#### Trophy Season

Mr. Gary advised the committee is going to have to come up with their own recommendations for the trophy season because there are no options provided in the addendum.

**A motion was made by Jeffrey Pharis, seconded by Paul Downey to recommend keeping the number of days we have now in the spring trophy season and raise the size limit to whatever it needs to be so that we don't lose any fishing days.**

Mr. Duby asked if he could add to the motion to cut out this catch and release nonsense. He does not want a pre-season fishery. We are killing fish by doing this. Mr. Pharis stated he had no comment on that right now. There was no second on the amended motion, therefore that part



fails for lack of a second and we are back to the original motion. Mr. Gary advised based on the motion made, the minimum size limit would probably be 34" or 35" and it's currently 28".

Mr. Bowling commented the reason we went down to a 28" minimum size limit was to reduce mortality of the large fish in the spring trophy season. If the size limit is raised beyond the 32" that it used to be, how will we address the fishing mortality and how will that affect us down the road. Mr. Gary stated if that passes the technical committee, it will be considered as a proportional decrease in fishing mortality. Commissioner Fleming commented the mortality rate of released fish in cold water is very low. There is data supporting this in a cold water fishery.

**Chairman Brown called for the vote and with 14 in favor, the motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Gary advised the committee should now consider alternatives in case ASMFC does not adopt these recommendations. He suggested discussing the 25 percent reduction first. He is questioning if the committee would want to recommend any other options as a backup.

**A motion was made by Jeffrey Pharis to recommend as a secondary option to go with B11, which is a bag limit of one, a size limit of 21" for a 29 percent reduction from the 2013 harvest.**

Mr. Gary advised that would stay in place until another amendment changed it. He advised that option B14 has a 25 percent reduction and is the least impactful. What it is saying is it's based on our quota and within that quota, we develop our bag limits with our staff and we would have a minimum size limit of 18"; however, you may have a shorter season because of the size limit.

**Mr. Pharis retracted his motion.**

**A motion was made by Paul Downey, seconded by Martin Duby to recommend under ASMFC approved 25 percent reduction, this committee would prefer option B14 - a Chesapeake Bay recreational quota of 2,000,915 pounds (no established bag limit, but a minimum size of 18"). The motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Gary advised the next situation would be reducing by 17 percent in 2015 and there are no additional reductions for 2016 or 2017.

**A motion was made by Paul Downey, seconded by Martin Duby to recommend option C7 - a Chesapeake Bay recreational quota of 2,214,345 pounds (no established bag limit, but a minimum size of 18"). The motion passed unanimously.**

#### 5.0 Issue 8: recommendation for Federal Waters

Mr. Gary explained if options in section 2.5 or 3.0 are adopted through the addendum process, the Board would consider which options, if any should be recommended to NOAA Fisheries for implementation in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). He noted this would be to allow the possibility of fish/possess or catch/release of striped bass in the EEZ. It would remove the protective status that is in place currently.

**A motion was made by Paul Downey, seconded by Jeffery Pharis to allow opening the EEZ.**

Mr. Downey explained that a lot of people go to Virginia Beach to fish. In the past two years there has been only one fish that has weighed in at the last two rock fish tournaments, because the fish are outside the three mile limit of the EEZ. This arbitrary three mile line is ridiculous.

Mr. Pharis stated this committee does and doesn't have a concern with this. If we are sitting here doing this because the female striped bass spawning index is down, but now we are going to open this up for one last bash at where they are protected, that doesn't make any sense to him. He has constituents that want it to open so that's his personal opinion and not the charter industry.

Chairman Brown asked if this would open the area up for commercial fishing as well. Mr. Gary advised that it would, because Maryland is advocating for it to open and the commercial fishery would operate under a quota.

Mr. Bowling stated we are being put into a coastal system where we are taking a cut. He can't see why at the same time we are taking a reduction because we are catching smaller fish, so he would jump at the chance to say yes to a 25 percent reduction this year if he thought that the stock was really down and needed that. But as the stock, as already stated is not overfished, he can't see turning around and opening it up for them to catch the fish that we are trying to protect at this time.

Mr. Downey stated this is an arbitrary line and if you are looking at the bigger picture of the economy of Virginia, it would be a boon for the economy. Mr. Bowling stated he is not here for the economy, he is here for the fish. He makes his living on catching fish, but you're not going to make your living or catch your fish if you don't take care of the biomass and that's what we have to openly be here for. It is not just for economic reasons or for our friends, he stated he's here because he cares. Mr. Downey stated again that everyone is here for economic reasons. Chairman Brown stated he definitely disagreed with Mr. Downey on that and stated yes, it may be our livelihood, but the resource is our greatest concern. Mr. Downey stated just by moving the line of the EEZ out doesn't mean it would destroy the biomass. Mr. Bowling stated we have a difference of opinion on what we're trying to do.

Russell Sullivan stated there should be concern of opening the area and feels it would allow boats to come in and catch more fish. We are getting penalized now by saying we have to reduce numbers, but you open that up, you are going to get numbers and you are going to catch the spawning fish. If those fish are outside the three mile line, leave them alone.

**Chairman Brown called for the vote and the motion failed with 1 in favor, 1 abstention and 12 against.**

Chairman Brown stated he can't support that because we have to take a 25 percent cut and we are all trying to live with this so how can you give them more when you are taking the initial bite.

**A motion was made by Martin Duby, seconded by James Bowling to recommend eliminating the catch and release pre-season activity.**

Commissioner Fleming stated there are a lot of people who simply like to fish using the catch and release techniques. He is not in support of eliminating that activity. George Willett asked if there was any doubt that catching these fish and throwing them back disrupts their reproductive system. Mr. Gary stated yes it does and there is data to suggest that there may be an impact.

**Chairman Brown called for the vote and with 3 in favor, 2 abstentions and 9 against, the motion failed.**

### **Discussion of the Recreational Fishery for Largemouth Bass**

Mr. Gary explained that largemouth bass has one of the biggest socioeconomic ripple effects. We do have a great recreational and guide fishery here on the Potomac River. He feels this species needs some attention from the Commission and will begin to prepare for a discussion at the upcoming December Commission meeting. This is being driven by perceived declines in qualitative and quantitative aspects of the fishery. Feedback is coming in from a number of sources that suggests that the tidal largemouth recreational guide fishery is not as good as it used to be and the quality is declining significantly. There seems to be some data that supports the number of fish available to the fishermen is declining as well. The fishery managers have some mixed feelings as to what the magnitude is. This is more for informational purposes and discussions will take place to see what the management agencies are doing to address this decline if it is real. It would be fair to say that Maryland and Virginia's technical staff that do the surveys will take the forefront on this issue and staff here at the PRFC will also weigh in as the process continues. In early November, a meeting will take place with the jurisdictions to go over data to see what's going on and report to the Commission at their December meeting.

Michael Meier who fishes for largemouth bass and has a vast knowledge of the fishery is on top of this issue. Mr. Meier stated there are concerns with recoupment and what kind of fish are in the population. He stated no one is catching 8" to 10" fish. Maryland has their views on this issue and conducted a survey, but he feels that is not creditable. Virginia seems to be taking a blind eye to the situation and feels there is no problem and that recruitment is good. Mr. Meier and his constituents are concerned that the fish are not there and it needs to be addressed. Mr. Gary stated he would keep the committee updated on the progress of this topic.

### **Advisory Committee Vacancies**

There were several members' terms that are due to expire March 31, 2015. The following members agreed to serve another term: Robert T. Brown, Russell Sullivan, Arthur Loving and Paul Downey.

There is a vacancy for a Virginia lower river recreational fisherman to fill a vacancy left by Steve Scala. Paul Downey stated there is a fishing club called the Potomac River Angles Club that may have someone who may be interested in serving. There is a message board with contact information at [prac.proboards.com](http://prac.proboards.com).

**Election of Chairman and Vice-chairman**

**A motion was made by Jeffrey Pharis, seconded by Paul Downey to elect Robert T. Brown as Chairman. The motion passed unanimously.**

**A motion was made by Arthur Loving, seconded by Kenneth Wicker to elect James Bowling as Vice-chairman. The motion passed unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Robert T. Brown, Chairman