



ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SHELLFISHERIES
MINUTES OF MARCH 26, 2015



Richardson & Robbins Building Auditorium, 89 Kings Highway., Dover, DE 19901
 Div. of Fish & Wildlife phone: 302-739-9914

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Leonard "Limbo" Voss, Jr., Chairman
 Patrick Gaffney (*Absent*)
 Virgilio Pacelli (*Absent*)
 Paul Satterfield
 Steven Copp (*Absent*)
 Richard S. Hand, Jr. (*Absent*)
 Robert Thompson (*Absent*)

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

John Clark
 Stew Michels
 David Saveikis, Director
 Rich Wong
 Mike Greco
 Mike Steiger
 Captain Nick Couch

PUBLIC

2 Visitors

Agenda Item 1. Approval of Minutes from 10/2/14 and 12/11/14 Meetings

Chairman Voss called the meeting to order at 6:05 and thanked everyone for their attendance. Due to the lack of a Council quorum, the minutes from October 2nd and December 11th could not be approved and were deferred to the next meeting.

Agenda Item 2. Delaware Bay oyster 2014 survey results and quota for 2015

Biometrician **Rich Wong** gave a brief history of the Delaware Bay oyster fishery and presented the results of the 2014 fall oyster survey. Spat were almost nonexistent in 2014 and spat abundance was low for the fourth consecutive year, with the natural oyster beds dominated by market size oysters that were produced by the huge spat set of 2010. He then discussed the estimated oyster population size and the 2014 commercial quota. Although the harvest control model recommended a 4% reduction from the 2014 quota for 2015, the 2015 quota will remain at the 2014 level of 12,245 bushels.

Agenda Item 3. Delaware Bay and River 2014 blue crab survey results and outlook for 2015

Environmental Scientist **Mike Greco** presented the results of the 2014 juvenile blue crab survey, which yielded a juvenile blue crab index much greater than the 2013 index and close to the 36-year time series mean. **Mr. Greco** explained that the juvenile blue crab index is a good predictor of adult blue crab abundance for the following year, so the 2015 blue crab harvest should be average. **Mr. Greco** was asked if the cold winter might have killed many of the juveniles, to which he replied that mortality may have been high this winter, but that juveniles overwinter better than adults.

Agenda Item 4. Options for changing the conch minimum size limit regulation to 5 inches

Mr. Clark explained that the current 6-inch minimum conch size limit is based on conch biology and past fishery management and performance. He acknowledged that there is an equity issue because Delaware has a 6-inch minimum size while New Jersey has a 5-inch minimum size for the shared Delaware Bay. However, New Jersey's open season for conch is only 5 months long while Delaware's season is open year-round. The 6-inch minimum size reduces the risk of

overfishing, so Delaware would need to constrain the conch harvest to prevent overfishing if the state returns to a 5-inch minimum size. **Mr. Clark** presented several options for Delaware that would reduce the minimum size regulation to 5 inches while constraining harvest with a 5-month season. After a lengthy discussion, the Council members present did not favor any of the 5-month options presented, with Chairman Voss stating that the Council and DFW appeared to be at an impasse on conch management.

Agenda Item 5. Topics & Tentative date for the next meeting

Mr. Voss remarked that the next meeting should be scheduled for January 2016 so the Council can discuss the oyster quota before it is set. He added that he thought the Council should meet on a Tuesday or Wednesday as it was difficult for Council members to attend Thursday night meetings.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
 John H. Clark
 Recording Secretary

