



# ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SHELLFISHERIES



## MINUTES OF JANUARY 6, 2016

DNREC Auditorium, 89 Kings Hwy, 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  
Richard S. Hand, Jr. (*Absent*)  
Robert Thompson (*Absent*)

### DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

John Clark  
Stew Michels  
David Saveikis, Director  
Rich Wong  
Mike Greco  
Capt. Nick Couch  
Leslie Reese

### PUBLIC

11 Visitors

#### **Agenda Item 1. Approval of Minutes from 9/9/15**

**Chairman Voss** called the meeting to order at 7:05PM and thanked everyone for their attendance. A quorum was not present and therefore the minutes were not approved.

#### **Agenda Item 2. Setting the 2016 Oyster Quota**

**Mr. Rich Wong**, fisheries biometrician, reviewed the oyster quota-setting process. The quota is based on the Division's fall oyster dredge survey data, which has found poor spat recruitment over the past two decades with a few exceptions, such as 2010, and a steady decline in market-sized abundance. While there was no abundance pattern among the beds, the survey suggested the fishery should not fish a bed for a few years after a period of heavy oystering on the bed. Due to this lower oyster population, the 2016 quota is reduced to 10,662 bushels.

#### **Agenda Item 3. Further Discussion of Oyster Spat Definition and Tolerance for Undersized Oysters**

**Capt. Nick Couch** summarized oyster harvest compliance, stating overall industry compliance, with only three oystermen cited for possession of undersized oysters, one of them twice, during the spring 2015 season. He further stated that officers are using extreme enforcement discretion as their goal is to achieve compliance to protect the resource and be fair to the fishermen and that citations were a last resort for violations. Draft regulatory language was presented by Mr. Stew Michels, shellfish program manager, allowing for a 5% tolerance of undersized oysters per bushel, with spat/oysters less than 1" long attached to market sized oysters being exempt from being counted as part of the tolerance. The Council members endorsed the proposed regulation (a quorum was not present) and the Division will initiate the process to change the regulation.

#### **Agenda Item 4. 2015 Juvenile Crab Index and 2016 Blue Crab Outlook**

**Mr. Mike Greco**, fisheries scientist, stated that the September and October 2015 survey found juvenile crabs throughout the range of sampling stations. The Juvenile Blue Crab Index was above the long-term mean Index and was the highest Index level recorded since 2005. The 2015 commercial harvest is expected to come in at 3.1 million pounds, with the projection for the 2016 harvest, based on the 2015 Juvenile Index, potentially over 4 million pounds.

#### **Agenda Item 5. Changing Shellfish Regulations**

**Mr. Michels**, following up on questions asked at the September meeting about conch management, shared that the department does not have the authority to allow a recreational conch harvest. On the topic of allowing conch potters to use more than half of a horseshoe crab as bait, Mr. Michels said that it would not be prudent to pursue liberalization at this time as it could invite scrutiny of Delaware's commercial horseshoe crab fishery by those who favor eliminating that fishery. Chairman Voss stated that he would inquire throughout the industry to get an indication of the significance of this bait problem before proceeding further with this issue.

#### **Agenda Item 6. Topics & Tentative date for the next meeting**

**Chairman Voss** stated that the next meeting will be scheduled for Fall of 2016 and suggested the following agenda item:

1. Shellfish Aquaculture in the Inland Bays

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Reese  
Recording Secretary

