In The Matter Of:

Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control Regulatory Amendments Tidal Finfish

Hearing February 26, 2020

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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE

RE: Proposed Regulatory Amendments to 7 DE Admin Code 3500, Tidal Finfish, 3550 Cobia - Public Hearing

DNREC Richardson & Robbins Building 89 Kings Highway Dover, Delaware 19901

Wednesday, February 26, 2020 6:40 p.m.

..

BEFORE: Theresa Newman, Hearing Officer

ALSO PRESENT: Stew Michels, DNREC

-- Transcript of Proceedings --

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1 MS. NEWMAN: Please allow the record to reflect the time is now 6:04 on 2 3 Wednesday, February 25, 2020. 4 This is the second of two hearings 5 scheduled tonight. This hearing is to provide a formal 6 platform for the State of Delaware's 7 Department of Natural Resources and 8 Environmental Control to receive public 9 10 comment on the Proposed Regulatory Amendments 11 to 7 DE Admin Code 3500 Tidal Finfish, to 12 include Proposed Regulation 3550, Cobia. 13 Again, for the record, my name is 14 Theresa Newman, and Secretary Garvin has 15 appointed me to serve as the hearing officer 16 for tonight's formal proceeding. Please allow the record to reflect 17 18 that all protocols that were previously stated for the preceding hearing are still in 19 place for this formal hearing tonight. 20 21 As a quick reminder, all persons wishing to speak tonight will be given an 22 23 opportunity to do so after the Department's 24 presentation.



Please keep in mind that this is a separate hearing matter. Verbal comments provided shall be strictly related to the Proposed Regulation 3550, Cobia.

Again, each person will be granted a total of three minutes to offer comment.

Please provide me with any written comment you have to be marked as a part of the record.

Before we begin the presentation, it is important to note that the record -- there is no decision that has been made by the Department, nor will any decision be made tonight.

A record consisting of the transcript of verbatim verbal comments given tonight, all written comments submitted prior to the hearing and after, all exhibits, and my report will be reviewed by the Secretary.

The Secretary will ultimately issue an order containing his decision of the proposed regulations and the reasons therefore.

The hearing record being generated



1	in this matter will close 15 days from
2	tonight's hearing on March 12, 2020.
3	All comment, whether offered
4	verbally tonight or submitted prior to March
5	12th in writing, will bear the exact same
6	weight and will be equally considered by the
7	Secretary prior to making a final decision in
8	this matter.
9	With that being said, I will hand
10	it over to Mr. Stewart Michels to present for
11	the Division of Fish and Wildlife.
12	MR. MICHELS: Thank you very much,
13	Theresa. Just one minor correction. I think
14	you said the time was 6:04, and it was
15	actually 6:40.
16	MS. NEWMAN: Oh, sorry. Thank you.
17	MR. MICHELS: That's quite all
18	right.
19	The Division has 14 exhibits that
20	we would like to offer for the record
21	MS. NEWMAN: Great.
22	MR. MICHELS: in this matter.
23	MS. NEWMAN: Thank you. Please
24	allow the record to reflect Exhibits 1



1	through 14, as given by Mr. Stewart, as the
2	Department's Exhibits 1 through 14.
3	MR. MICHELS: And then we have a
4	brief presentation I can make regarding this
5	matter, if it pleases you.
6	MS. NEWMAN: Please do so.
7	MR. MICHELS: All righty. Again,
8	thank you everybody. I'm really, really
9	impressed by the turnout for Cobia.
10	UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You put it
11	on the same night as striper. What do you
12	expect? (Laughter)
13	MR. MICHELS: That's right. Well
14	done me! (Laughter)
15	Now, okay, so this is proposing a
16	new section of the Delaware Administrative
17	Code. Right now we have, as most of you are
18	aware, no regulations in place.
19	Unfortunately, Cobia biomass has
20	declined over the past two decades. However,
21	as best we can determine, the stock is not
22	overfished, and no overfishing is occurring
23	as of yet.
24	The ASMFC approved an Interstate



Fishery Management Plan for the Atlantic migratory group of Cobia way back in November of 2017.

According to that plan, Delaware must adopt precautionary management measures for Cobia.

Because Delaware has no reported commercial Cobia landings, and we have no estimated recreational landings, although we do know that Cobia are taken on occasion in Delaware, we have two options.

We can either adopt the Option 1 measures, which are referred to as de minimis measures, because we are a de minimis state, meaning that we have minor landings; or we can adopt the -- well, the fishing options of our nearest non-de-minimis neighbor, which in this case would be Virginia.

So in the draft regulation, you can see there is both options are laid out as they would appear. That's an either/or. So we have to select one or the other.

For simplicity, though, I'm going to leave this up here for you to comment on.

1 I think it's a little bit more clear to --2 more clearly lays out what the two options 3 are for you to provide comment on. 4 And again, just like the last one, we will take your comment verbally or in 5 writing tonight, or you can also supply 6 7 comments in writing on one of those other various forms. 8 9 The Department will accept public 10 comment through the close of business on 11 Thursday, March 12, 2020, as previously 12 mentioned. And with that, that concludes the 13 14 presentation. 15 MS. NEWMAN: Thank you. As the 16 Department has no further remarks, I will now 17 open up the floor to public comment. Please keep in mind there is a 18 three-minute timer set in place, and all 19 20 comment shall pertain to the hearing matter 21 only. First up we have Tyler O'Neal. 22 23 MR. O'NEAL: So I'm Tyler O'Neal. 24 I'm a small business owner that deals with



1 fisheries in Delaware. And I'm a Delaware board member for the American (inaudible) 2 3 Association. 4 So to manage conservatively, the 5 raising potential increase at ASMFC's concern, as fishing efforts rise 6 7 considerably, we don't want to end up in a situation where we have ended up with a lot 8 9 of other stocks managed under ASMFC, given 10 that I believe 17 of the 26 are overfished or 11 status unknown. 12 So I would go for the Option 2 with the 40-inch limit. There is not a ton of 13 14 Cobia in Delaware waters, so the chance that 15 a vessel is going to have three shots to 16 hook, land, and keep three fish over 40 17 inches is probably pretty rare. And I think that would save more 18 19 fish, just to make sure that we are not 20 ending up in a situation where we are going 21 to end up overfishing another species. 22 you. 23 MS. NEWMAN: Thank you, Mr. O'Neal.

I don't have anyone else who

Okay.

24

1	has signed in that marked that they wanted to
2	provide a comment. However, if you would
3	like to, please raise your hand, and I will
4	call upon you.
5	MR. KING: I have two questions.
6	Can I ask those?
7	MS. NEWMAN: You may ask the
8	question, but you will not receive a response
9	tonight. Your response will be provided to
10	you.
11	MR. KING: Well, the question is
12	going to depend upon my comment. Do we have
13	a commercial fishery for Cobia in Delaware?
14	MR. MICHELS: May I answer?
15	MS. NEWMAN: Sure. (Laughter)
16	MR. MICHELS: We do not have a
17	directed Cobia fishery, but there is nothing
18	that would prohibit someone from landing
19	Cobia.
20	MR. KING: Okay.
21	MS. NEWMAN: Can you state your
22	name for the record? I'm sorry.
23	MR. KING: Rich King.
24	MS. NEWMAN: Okay. Thank you.



1	Sir, I saw you placed your hand up. Would
2	you like to provide a comment?
3	MR. LUPINETTI: Me?
4	MS. NEWMAN: Yes.
5	MR. LUPINETTI: Well, I just have a
6	question, too. I guess my question is
7	MS. NEWMAN: Sir, could you state
8	your name first, please?
9	MR. LUPINETTI: I'm John Lupinetti.
10	I guess what my question is, you
11	could be commercial and tell me if I'm
12	correct or not you could be commercial.
13	If you catch them hook and line and then fit
14	the criteria, you could sell them, if you
15	caught them hook and line, if you have a
16	commercial license; correct?
17	MR. MICHELS: You can take them
18	commercially now using any gear that you
19	happen to catch with.
20	MR. LUPINETTI: Yeah. So it is
21	there, I mean, if you can catch them hook and
22	line and sell them, whatever they want to do?
23	MR. MICHELS: Yeah. I mean,
24	technically, if they caught them in a gill



1	net.
2	MR. LUPINETTI: Yeah. They can
3	keep them, then?
4	MR. MICHELS: Sure. Sure.
5	MS. NEWMAN: Thank you,
6	Mr. Lupinetti. Is there any others who would
7	like to provide a comment?
8	MR. KING: Yeah. I'm Rich King. I
9	would say go with Option 1, just for the fact
10	that if you go with Option 2, you are looking
11	at killing larger fish recreationally.
12	Right now, recreational anglers are
13	the ones that are whacking these fish. I
14	know this because last year these guys were
15	hammering these things.
16	So if the smaller fish are not your
17	breeders or almost your breeders, it's just
18	better to protect the larger fish than the
19	smaller fish.
20	The other question I have is with
21	the Option 2, so the recreational would have
22	a season, and the commercial would be all
23	year? And Option 1, we would have an all
24	year and all year?



1	MR. MICHELS: (Nodding head.)
2	MR. KING: Okay. So I would like
3	to have Option 1, but I would like to see a
4	season for recreational for the same as
5	Option 2.
6	I mean, they are really only here
7	from June to September anyway. You don't
8	really see them in October.
9	We got a lot of guys that are
10	spearfishing these things that nobody knows
11	about. You see it when you jump off the boat
12	and they shoot it.
13	MR. O'NEAL: So I know I'm not
14	allowed to do another comment. But can I ask
15	a question and ask the same thing?
16	There was no question period in
17	between the presentation and the comment
18	period.
19	MR. MICHELS: If you prefer, we can
20	close, and I can if comments are over, you
21	can close.
22	MR. LUPINETTI: I was going to make
23	another comment. (Laughter)
24	(Many people are talking amongst each



1 other from their seats.) 2 MS. NEWMAN: So, yeah, we don't 3 want to go with a back and forth. Unless you 4 have something that is pertinent to the record being open that you would like to 5 provide your opinion or some type of fact 6 7 finding, I would appreciate it if you would 8 provide those to us in a written form. 9 MR. LUPINETTI: Well, the big thing 10 is I'm kind of -- there was no -- we couldn't really ask questions and then make -- because 11 12 I've got my question answered, and now I'm ready to make a decision on what option I 13 14 would decide on if I was going to select an 15 option. 16 MS. NEWMAN: Okay. I got what you 17 are saying. Go ahead, and you can proceed on 18 with your comment. MR. LUPINETTI: 19 I would go with 20 Option 1, but I think that there should be a 21 season, just like Rich, on recreational and commercial. 22 23 MS. NEWMAN: Okay. Thank you. 24 can you state your name for the record again?



1	Can you please state your name for the record
2	again?
3	MR. LUPINETTI: John Lupinetti.
4	MS. NEWMAN: Thank you. I know you
5	wanted go ahead, sir. You hadn't provided
6	a comment yet.
7	MR. SMITH: Yeah.
8	MS. NEWMAN: Could you state your
9	name, please?
10	MR. SMITH: Ron Smith. I'm a
11	recreational fisherman. And I think I would
12	have to go to Option 1.
13	And my approach is a little
14	different. I mean, all of this is
15	hypothetical, since we really do not have
16	that many fish in the water now, but they are
17	coming.
18	I think with I want to be as
19	conservative as I can. And with a vessel
20	limit of one in Option 1, you will have less
21	boats leaving the dock targeting Cobia,
22	whereas, if you're permitted three, then it's
23	possible, if the Cobia are there, you are
24	going to actually have boats with a number of



1	people going out and targeting them.
2	But as it is with a vessel limit of
3	only one, then that becomes well, if there
4	is one out there, we will cast to it; but,
5	otherwise, we are not going to go out and
6	Cobia fish target, anyway.
7	MR. LUPINETTI: All year?
8	MR. SMITH: And all year. I'm
9	going to be a little I will say it.
10	Because if there are Cobia here or further
11	south, when you have Cobia, they are here
12	later than September 15th.
13	So, and really, to me, um, from the
14	standpoint of being a recreational fisherman,
15	I catch and release everything anyway, so the
16	size of it doesn't make any difference.
17	MS. NEWMAN: Thank you, Mr. Smith.
18	Mr. O'Neal, because I allowed the others to
19	provide their opinion after they had their
20	original question that was answered, did you
21	have an additional opinion to make or?
22	MR. O'NEAL: Well, given the
23	questions that have been answered, I would
24	actually like to change my option, because I



1	have opened my eyes on a couple of different
2	things that had not been previously touched
3	on.
4	MS. NEWMAN: That's fine. You can
5	a go ahead and provide your
6	MR. O'NEAL: I am now in favor of
7	option one.
8	MS. NEWMAN: Okay.
9	MR. O'NEAL: So it just I guess
10	if you can add that to the record or correct
11	the record, so
12	MS. NEWMAN: Sure.
13	MR. KING: Have a do-over!
14	(Laughter)
15	MR. O'NEAL: Yeah.
16	MS. NEWMAN: Thank you, Mr. O'Neal.
17	UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't want
18	to be the same as the guys in Virginia,
19	anyway! (Laughter)
20	(Talking in audience from seats -
21	inaudible)
22	MS. NEWMAN: So, as the Department
23	has met the hearing protocols, and there are
24	no further public comments, the record will



1	remain open, again, through March 12, 2020,
2	to receive additional comments in this
3	matter, at which time the record will then
4	close.
5	I would like to thank you all for
6	your attendance today. And the hearing is
7	now adjourned at 6:53 p.m.
8	(The proceedings were concluded at 6:53
9	p.m.)
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1 CERTIFICATE I, Lorena J. Hartnett, a Notary Public and 2 3 Registered Professional Reporter, do hereby certify 4 that the foregoing is an accurate and complete transcription of the proceeding held at the time and 5 place stated herein, and that the said proceeding was 6 7 recorded by me and then reduced to typewriting under my direction, and constitutes a true record of the 8 testimony given by said witnesses. 9 10 I further certify that I am not a relative, 11 employee, or attorney of any of the parties or a 12 relative or employee of either counsel, and that I am in no way interested directly or indirectly in this 13 14 action. IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my 15 hand and affixed my seal of office on this 28th day 16 17 of February 2020. 18 19 20 21 22 Lorena J. Hartnett Registered Professional Reporter 23



24

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