



COUNCIL ON SHELLFISHERIES

MINUTES OF JANUARY 9, 2023



Hybrid Meeting. In-person attendance: Kent Conservation District Building 1679 S. Dupont Highway, Dover, DE 19901
Virtual WebEx Meeting Div. of Fish & Wildlife phone: 302-739-9914

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Leonard "Limbo" Voss, Jr., Chairman
Jordan Giuttari
Desmond Kahn
Paul Satterfield
Steven Copp (*Absent*)
Richard S. Hand, Jr.
Edward Hale, Jr.

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

John Clark
David Stormer
Zina Hense
Rich Wong
Mike Greco
Captain Nick Couch
David Saveikis, Director

PUBLIC

16 Visitors

Agenda Item 1. Approval of Minutes from July 12, 2022 - Chairman Voss called the meeting to order at 7:03PM and thanked everyone for their attendance. A motion was made and seconded and the Council voted unanimously to accept the July 12, 2022 meeting minutes as written.

Agenda Item 2. 2023 Oyster Stock Status and Discussion of Harvest Quota – Rich Wong, Fisheries Biometrician, reviewed the oyster commercial harvest quota-setting process. Spat abundance increased in 2022 to the highest level since 2017, but the abundance of market-sized oysters dropped in 2022 due to four consecutive previous years of low spat recruitment. The harvest control model recommended a 2023 harvest quota of 13,016 bushels, which is 36% lower than the 2022 quota of 19,270 bushels. Mortality of small and market-sized oysters returned to the high levels typical of much of the past 30 years. Most spat recruitment in 2022 occurred on the Woodland Beach and Drum beds. The Silver bed had the highest harvest in 2022. Mr. Wong recommended that harvest be reduced on the Drum bed in 2023 due to the high harvest rates in recent years.

Agenda Item 3. 2022 Juvenile Crab Index and 2023 Blue Crab Outlook – Mike Greco, Fisheries Scientist, stated that the September and October 2022 blue crab survey resulted in a 2022 Young of the Year (YOY) index of 3.60, the lowest level since 2013. The 2022 blue crab commercial harvest estimate based on the 2021 YOY index was 3.9 million pounds and the reported 2022 commercial blue crab harvest is currently at 3.8 million pounds with some harvest reports still being submitted, demonstrating the predictive value of the YOY index. The blue crab commercial harvest estimate for 2023 based on the 2022 YOY index is approximately 2.7 million pounds.

Agenda Item 4. Update on Inland Bays Aquaculture Regulation Amendment Process – Zina Hense, Environmental Scientist IV, stated the proposed amendments are currently under legal review at the Attorney General's office. The proposed changes include an addition of a "cultivation tag"; changing the Shellfish Aquaculture Development Areas (SADA) location definition in the Little Assawoman Bay to match the statutory definition; lease boundary marking requirements for the Little Assawoman

Bay; clarification of the permitting process; clarification of gear marking and placement requirements; allowing 'semi-permanent' structures; adjustments to the lease boundary survey requirements; clarifications of minimum planting and harvest requirements; modifying the return date for the annual grower survey; declaring it unlawful to fix, set or erect shellfish aquaculture gear outside the lease boundaries; and a prohibition on shellfish gardening without authorization from the Shellfish and Recreational Water Programs.

Agenda Item 5. Addendum VIII to the ASMFC Horseshoe Crab FMP and Proposed Revisions to the Horseshoe Crab Regulation – John Clark, Fisheries Administrator, explained the proposed revisions to the Horseshoe Crab regulation needed to comply with Addendum VIII to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Horseshoe Crab Fishery Management Plan. In addition to revising the regulation to comply with Addendum VIII, the Division is proposing additional revisions to better reflect the operations of this fishery. After discussion with the Council, the Division agreed to incorporate the Council's recommendations on the daily possession limit and the dredge season criteria into the proposed regulation changes.

Public Comments.

A member of the public asked the Council and Division to consider the following proposal: develop a policy statement that supports the value of returning shell to the Delaware Bay; create a Council sub-committee to consider creating a Delaware Bay program for placing shell on natural beds and creating new beds; and develop a system for the public to access information on shell placement. The Council agreed to include the topic on the next meeting agenda.

Another member of the public asked the Council and Division to consider creating a new commercial crab trot line license that could also be added to a commercial crab pot license.

Agenda Item 6. Topics & tentative date for the next meeting

Chairman Voss stated that the next meeting will be tentatively scheduled for May 2023 and suggested the following agenda items:

1. Further discussion of Inland Bays aquaculture regulations.
2. Oyster stock size estimate update.
3. Oyster shell seeding update.
4. Adopt commercial trotline license.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by

Rebecca Hoover

Rebecca Hoover
Recording Secretary

