

Sport Fisheries Advisory Meeting  
Tawes State Office Building C1, Annapolis, Maryland  
March 17, 2008

The meeting was called to order 6 pm by Commission Chairman Richard Gaines.

Commissioners Present:  
Richard Gaines, Chairman  
Diane Baynard  
James Smith  
Bill Carrier  
David Dansberger  
Bill Windley

Natural Resources Police Report – Superintendent George Johnson

NRP has 230 officers and 50 vacancies. Secretary Griffin and Deputy Secretary Schwaab gave permission to fill 30 vacancies. Plans are to hire 15 laterals and 15 entry level officers. Laterals will be officers with police experience and lateral hiring should be completed by September 2008. The laterals will attend NRP training for 3 months. Entry levels will attend the Academy and complete 3 months of training. 69 officers are due to retire within next couple of years.

Colonel Johnson is in his 14<sup>th</sup> month as Superintendent of the NRP and is very impressed with the level of dedication and commitment of our NRP workforce. NRP works closely with all DNR units. Colonel Johnson feels that communication is very important with units and emphasized that NRP is only a phone call away.

NRP's boating fleet dates back to 1973. Boat fees are used for boat replacement and fees have not increased since 1985. Hopefully legislation will be passed in 2009 to have a dedicated fund for our fleet. NRP received \$6.8 million in federal grants for port security in 2006. \$2.8 million went to computer aided communications. Grant money also went to location moves, 2 tactical Zodiacs and 6 new SeaArks.

Commissioner Brenda Foster asked how many of the new officers will be assigned to Inland Fisheries. Superintendent Johnson said every area will be covered. NRP has eight target offices and multiple vacancies. There will be equitable coverage in each office.

Commissioner Dansberger asked if attrition rate will surpass staff. Superintendent Johnson said there is open and continuous receiving of applications for officers. If we lost 10 people to retirement we will replace 10. Budget constraints sometimes hindered this process. Our best intention is to fill vacancies. The SFAC needs to let people know we are losing manpower.

Aviation Division is an important NRP service. \$6.8 million federal grant included homeland security package, \$2.4 million is teamed with MSP, MVA, which will open opportunity for information sharing. Commissioner O'Brien said SFAC supports NRP budget in legislation. Superintendent Johnson said the State is trying to consolidate as much as possible in order to save money. The Maryland State Police (MSP) uses a different helicopter than Natural Resource Police (NRP). NRP uses helicopters for search and rescue, marijuana eradication. MSP uses a much bigger helicopter for medivac purposes. MSP can't assume our missions. Our pilots are NRP officers. NRP's helicopters are old but are well maintained. Our helicopters are 2/3

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cheaper to maintain than MSP's. It costs DNR \$200 an hour to maintain a helicopter and MSP \$600 an hour to maintain their helicopters. Natural Resources needs to maintain their own helicopter fleet.

Chairman Gaines reported that the 1 800 POACHER number does not work. He called to report illegal fishing on the Wye River and was asked where is the Wye River. Superintendent Johnson replied there are new people working the POACHER phones and NRP is working to have a more efficient response.

Cpl. Beth McVeigh and Lt. Paul Hanyok reported the following: In Ocean City, federal citations have been issued for over the limit scallops, finfish inspections performed in the Crisfield area found no violations, undersized oysters found at seafood dealer in Crisfield, surveillance of unattended gill nets continue in the Chesapeake, Tilghman waterman was cited for over the limit striped bass and too much gill net, officers check average of 10 ice fishermen each weekend at Deep Creek Lake.

#### Regulations

Gina Hunt, Assistant Director reported Fisheries will implement permits for snapping turtles which will create better information on its population.

Striped bass pound net and hook and line tags continue to be an enforcement problem.

#### Inland Fisheries

Don Cosden, Assistant Director of Inland Fisheries reported the emergency gate of the Savage River Reservoir needs repair. Water level is down and the erosion in pool is moving sediment downstream. Hopefully, repairs can be done by spring and pool refilled. If repairs cannot be made pool would partially fill and have warm water outflow which will decrease the trout population.

Bear Creek Hatchery – sediment has been hauled out and fish have been tested for whirling disease. If no disease is found we will put hatchery in production.

Proposed regulations – A handout on Inland Fisheries Regulation changes for 2009 was distributed to Commissioners. The handout lists public meetings and proposed changes for Inland Fisheries.

Jay Kilian, Biologist from Resource Assessment Service gave an overview of the invasive species rusty crayfish and its destructive nature. A brochure on the crayfish was handed out to the commissioners. The rusty crayfish is native to Ohio River watershed. Its introduction into Maryland was likely caused unintentionally by anglers using it as bait. Maryland will be introducing regulations to control the rusty crayfish.

#### Striped Bass Monitoring

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Eric Durell gave an overview of striped bass monitoring. DNR is required to report migratory harvest to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. To estimate harvest, data is collected from private recreational fishing effort.

Creel surveys are conducted for the charter fleet and recreational fishermen. A new creel survey will be conducted this year for the Susquehanna Flats season. The Volunteer Charter Boat Survey supplies measurements of the first 20 fish they catch per trip and indicate whether each fish was kept or released. Over 8,000 fish lengths were provided to the Department.

The Striped Bass Volunteer Angler Survey is an internet-based survey. Anglers supply DNR with the lengths of the first 20 fish caught per fishing trip, and whether they kept or released. 3,000 fish lengths from 1000 trips were reported.

A telephone survey of anglers will be conducted through a contractor to develop a MRFSS-independent estimate of spring striped bass harvest. Over 6,000 randomly selected license holders will be called and interviewed about striped bass fishing activity.

Yellow Perch – Dale Weinrich

A handout regarding the results of the yellow perch survey so far was given to the commission. The information collected during the survey will be used to revise the Yellow Perch Fisheries Management Plan.

Blue Crab Update – Lynn Fegley

A draft regulatory package for public comment is being created. A final proposed regulatory package will be completed in early April. By mid-April emergency regulations will be available for public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.