

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON TIDAL FINFISHERIES



MINUTES OF September 19, 2023



Hybrid Meeting. In-person attendance: Kent Conservation District Building and Virtual Teams Meeting.
Div. of Fish & Wildlife phone: 302-739-9914

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Dewayne Fox, Ph.D., Chair (*Absent*)
Bernie Pankowski
Brian Hoeffcker
Michael Cerchio. (*Absent*)
P. "Wes" Townsend (*Absent*)
Joseph Smith
Matthew Tull

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

John Clark
Captain Carl Winckoski
Patrick Emory, Director

PUBLIC

6 Visitors

Agenda Item 1. Welcome

Councilor Bernie Pankowski called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and welcomed everyone.

Agenda Item 2. Approval of April 18, 2023 Meeting Minutes and Introduction of new Councilor.

Motion made by Mr. Hoeffcker to accept the April meeting minutes as written, with Council passing the motion unanimously. Mr. Pankowski introduced and welcomed Mr. Matthew Tull, the new Recreational Fisheries Councilor for Kent County.

Agenda Item 3. Modifying the Dates of the Spring Commercial Gill Net Season - Council, Councilor

Hoeffcker briefed the Council on the current commercial gill net season dates and recommended changing the dates of the spring anchor gill net season to take advantage of earlier arrival of striped bass in Delaware Bay and the better market price received for striped bass. John Clark, Fisheries Section Administrator, discussed considerations for changing the regulation, emphasizing the change should not increase spring anchor gill net effort by increasing the number of fishing days. The Council agreed that adding two weeks in February should be offset by removing two weeks at the end of the season. Mr. Hoeffcker made a motion to recommend the Division change the anchor dates for the commercial spring gill net season from March 1 – May 10 to February 15 – April 27. The Council passed the motion unanimously.

Agenda Item 4. Regulatory Update – John Clark, Fisheries Administrator, stated the public hearing on proposed amendments to the Shellfish Aquaculture regulations will be held virtually on September 27 at 6 pm. Public comments will be accepted in written form through October 12, 2023.

Agenda Item 5. Mid Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) – John Clark, Fisheries

Administrator, summarized the MAFMC August Meeting, which included a joint meeting of the MAFMC and ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass and Bluefish Boards. The MAFMC and ASMFC jointly approved a 2024 Recreational Harvest Limit (RHL) for Summer Flounder that is 40% lower than the 2023 RHL and will likely require more restrictive 2024 recreational regulations, a 2024 RHL for Black Sea Bass that is 5% lower than the 2023 RHL and may require more restrictive 2024 recreational regulations, and a

2024 RHL for Bluefish that will maintain current recreational regulations in 2024.

Agenda Item 6. Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) – John Clark, Fisheries Administrator, summarized the Summer ASMFC meeting, which was held in August. The American Eel Board approved the benchmark stock assessment for management use. The Striped Bass emergency measure, which reduced the recreational size slot limit to 28" – 31", will remain in place through 2024 or until Draft Addendum II, which is currently in development and may require different management measures, is approved.

Agenda Item 7. Director's Update – Patrick Emory, Fish and Wildlife Division Director, updated the Council on the 7th Street Wilmington boat ramp construction, which is now complete and will have a ribbon cutting to which the Council will be invited. The Dobbinsville Fishing Pier is currently in the design phase. In addition, Director Emory would like the Deputy Attorney General to explain the role of Advisory Councils to the Council at their next meeting.

Suggested Agenda Items for Next Meeting

1. Roles and Responsibilities of Advisory Council (Devera Scott, Attorney General's Office).
2. Discussion of Advisory Council Meeting Location.
3. Update on 2023 Surf Tag Reservation System.

The meeting adjourned at 7:29 PM

Respectfully Submitted by

Rebecca Hoover
Recording Secretary