

VMRC Crab Management Advisory Committee

Allocation: summary of comments

Fall 2016

Among members of CMAC, 0 were for and 4 were against creating a jurisdiction-specific allocation-based framework. Those against cited as major concerns:

- a potential burdening of the recreational fishery under such a scheme
- difficulty in implementation and enforcement
- negative impacts on Virginia crabbing industry
- overregulation of the fishery.

Comments regarding jurisdictional-specific allocation:

AGAINST:

1. I am concerned that the recreational fishery in Virginia would get included in such a program as the effort and catch are so tied to the population. Also no one really knows what the recreational harvest is, except to say that it is way less than the commercial harvest. With the recent trends to lower populations and lack of historic landings, I am concerned that that Virginia's recreational fishery would be unfairly burdened were such a program implemented.
2. I think it was easy for the people to come to an agreement at the Watershed Agreement, but it is not going to be easy to implement. It easy to put the load on other people without understanding the complications in different fisheries, different crabbing habits from up and down the bay, and not to mention who wants to spend their time on something, according to the last email from Rob, even the FEDS think it will be almost impossible to implement.
3. Jurisdictional quotas are not in the best interest to Va Industry.
4. We have been operating under a regiment for more than 5 years which is based primarily on dredge survey sampling data and annual landings. From this data, whether we as industries members agree or not, the scientific community has established their own management regiment. This is in the form of exploitation rates, thresholds, juvenile, female, male etc biomass. All of these values are in the form of a number or value. These numbers we've had to live with, like it or not, are the parameters set form by the scientific community. Are these parameters no longer feasible? Why are coming back to the table to micromanagement this fishery with another number. Numbers in my opinion, has gotten us exactly where we are. Fractured pot limits, fractured catch limits, fractured sanctuary periods, and fractured capture of brown to black sponge crabs. My point is we don't need to create another regulation, which it most assuredly will become, as we've seen demonstrated time and time again. I do not support this proposal of jurisdictional quotas. Crabs have been more plentiful the last 2 years than we seen in some time. We don't need to decide what each jurisdiction should be allowed to harvest annually. Furthermore, with today's unpredictable weather patterns and forecasted sea level rise the dynamics of our crab fishery will adjust as these things unfold. Finally, we continue to look in an effort to better manage our fishery using all possible resources. I have no problem with this if it truly is needed. However, we also must look at the economic fallout of such actions. The blue crab is a commodity. There's no question they are more readily assessable now than ever before. Let's not box ourselves into a situation with another limit when other states have unlimited quota.