

**MEETING OF THE MARINE RECREATIONAL
FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT PANEL**

May 19, 2010

Wellesley Public Library

Attendance:

Panel Members: Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission Chairman Mark Amorello and Commissioner Chuck Casella; Mike Moss of the Massachusetts Sportsmen's Council; and Patrick Paquette of the Massachusetts Striped Bass Association, Massachusetts Beach Buggy Association, and the Recreational Fishing Alliance. (Not in attendance: Elizabeth Stromeier of Red Top Bait and Tackle.)

Department of Fish and Game: Commissioner Mary Griffin

Division of Marine Fisheries: Director Paul Diodati, Deputy Director Dan McKiernan, Paul Caruso, Mike Armstrong, Kevin Creighton, Stephanie Cunningham, Greg Skomal

Office of Fishing and Boating Access: Jack Sheppard

DISCUSSION OF MISSION AND SELECTION OF CHAIR

Director Diodati began the meeting with a discussion of the Marine Recreational Fisheries Development Panel's (Panel) role. He noted that it was an advisory panel that would provide project recommendations to improve the Commonwealth's recreational fishery. Paul noted that the Panel would operate similarly to the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFC), meaning that the Director consults the Panel, and would adopt proposals through consensus. Likewise Panel members could petition the Director to conduct specific projects through the Panel's Chairman. The Chairman would then work hand-in-hand with the Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) and the MFC to realize these goals.

Commissioner Griffin suggested that Chuck Casella be Chairman, due to his position as the recreational fishing representative from the MFC. Mike Moss nominated Chuck as Chairman. Mark Amorello seconded the notion. **Consensus approval.**

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Paul discussed the comments made by Liz Stromeier via e-mail, which dealt with program and permit outreach and how initial anger dissipated as constituents were further educated on the program's purpose and scope.

Patrick Paquette stated the Chatham for-hire fleet was confused about the requisite permits. Paul suggested that a letter be written to the for-hire fleet about permit needs. Kevin Creighton added that this should accompany a mailing that was already primed to go out. Mike mentioned the spring MBBA meeting is a good weekend for outreach. Chuck stated that the Commonwealth

should conduct more outreach, particularly with a focus on tourists and Patrick noted the need for more outreach to ethnic communities and questioned which languages would be appropriate. Spanish and Portuguese as well as Asian dialects were cited.

Paul discussed holding an event at the oldest tackle shop in the state to issue a “first” commemorative permit.

Paul also stated he would distribute a *Marine Fisheries* organizational chart to the Panel to better communication and networking.

Kevin stated the expectation that by November all of the Department’s sporting licenses will be issued by “Active Outdoors.” In addition to the saltwater recreational license, they will be handling hunting and freshwater fishing permits as well. He noted that DMF will issue licenses at the Worcester and New England Boat Shows, as well as other venues if so desired by the Panel. Kevin continued that the license fee was going to be \$10. Active Outdoors was going to add a \$1.50 surcharge and 3rd party vendors could add another \$1.50 surcharge. He also agreed to make available a clip art proto-type license with all applicable license information.

It was requested that both MFC and the Panel be copied on the draft regulation memo and that this memo also include language on saltwater/freshwater delineations. The Panel also commented that it was necessary to clearly define what recreational fishing is, who needs to obtain a permit, and what the non-compliance penalties are. The Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) stated that these concerns would be directed to Department of Fish and Game General Counsel, Rich Lehan, for his review.

The public hearing for this regulation was discussed, and it was determined that it would be held in late August or September and that the ANF hearing, to discuss fees, would be held simultaneously. The Director laid out the planned fee schedule for for-hire vessels: \$125 for resident charter, \$175 for resident party, \$625 for out-of-state charter, and \$835 for out-of-state party.

Paul agreed to share the details of any interstate reciprocity conversations and agreements with the Panel. The Commissioner, with the approval of the Panel, suggested that these communiqués be conducted in writing; the Director agreed.

The discussion turned to enforcement and fines. It was stated that statutory law would dictate the fine schedule. It was proposed that any revenue from recreational fishing fines be given to the *Marine Fisheries* fund. However, Patrick and Mike stated that if possible the Office of Law Enforcement should retain the revenue derived from these fines as an incentive to enforce the law. The panel discussed local enforcement and it was determined that Harbormasters had no authority to enforce this regulation. Patrick stated that he would like to see individuals who failed to obtain a for-hire permit be restricted from obtaining such a permit in subsequent years. Mike Moss argued against making non-compliance offenses criminal because he feared that it would affect a sportsman’s ability to conduct other non-fishing sporting activity.

The Panel discussed permit revenue appropriation. Paul reiterated the law: 1/3 of funding was to be spent on public access. Mike Moss raised two questions. First, was *Marine Fisheries*' spending affected if funding was appropriated to the Office of Fishing and Boating Access? Second, had there been any indication, or reason to believe, that the legislature will cut *Marine Fisheries* general appropriation by a value equivalent to the funds not appropriated to public access? The Director stated that this was not yet the case. With regards to funding appropriation Paul noted that past estimates of anglers have been much higher than the permits sold in states with permitting operations already underway. He also noted that additional staff will be needed for permitting in 2011, and that this will have to be deducted from the 2012 appropriation.

ACTION ITEMS

Chuck raised nine action items:

- 1) The development of a poster similar to the NMFS registry poster, for the 2011 Commonwealth license program.
- 2) Distribution of business cards this summer for next year's program.
- 3) Panel members will investigate user interest and attendance if a kick-off event is held
- 4) A legal review of regulations, penalties, and appropriations.
- 5) Development of a wallet sized laminated permit.
- 6) Distribution of a legal/regulatory memo to Panel and MFC.
- 7) Schedule public hearings for both the regulations and the fees.
- 8) Hold meeting with the *MassWildlife* to determine freshwater/saltwater delineations for advertisement.
- 9) Determine suitability of reciprocity agreements with neighboring states.

CLOSING STATEMENTS

It was determined that the next meeting will be held after the public hearing and that formal minutes will be taken. Jack Sheppard stated that he would like to see funds spent on increasing access to the resource. Patrick stated that legal work needed to be done to facilitate this access; for example railroad security preventing anglers from accessing the Cape Cod side of the canal.