

**Meeting of the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission**

**April 17, 2025**

**Summary of Actions and Motions**

**Commissioners in Attendance:** Vice-Chair Robert T. Brown, Rachel Dean, Russell Dize, Rachel Fazenbaker, Sonny Gwin, Chair Steve Lay, Jeff Pharis, Bill Rice, Bill Scerbo, Bill Sieling, David M. Sutherland.

**Commissioners Absent and Not Represented:** Brandon Malec, Brian Nesspor, Bubby Powley.

**Staff Participating:** Lynn Fegley, Paul Genovese, Lieutenant Kevin Kelly, Jacob Holtz, Sarah Widman, Carrie Kennedy, Michael Luisi, Tony Prochaska.

**Other Participants, Public Comment and Remote Total:** Jeffrey Roberts with Brandt Information Systems, Rachael Gilde with the Maryland Port Authority, Angie Sowers with the US Army Corps of Engineers and a high of 31 individuals observed online at any given time.

**Actions:**

- 3,000 commercial watermen have not submitted a harvest report since September of 2024, this is estimated to represent over 50% of all harvesters. 1,131 commercial crabbers have not submitted any reports for 2024, they need to submit now. The department cannot do its job of managing the fisheries (well) without this information from the commercial sector. Please do what you can to let us know what you catch and encourage others to do the same. The electronic reporting system users are not included among the nonreporters. Thank you to the commission for the suggestions given on how to improve commercial reporting rates.
- The commission will vote on its officers during the July meeting, please be prepared (this is an annual requirement). Current chair is Steve Lay and Vice-Chair is Robert T. Brown, officers can serve consecutive terms with no limits.
- Commissioner Pharis suggested to the NRP that the trainees go out with commercial watermen for a ride along, to learn how the watermen operate and give the trainees a deeper understanding of industry. Lt. Kelly will bring the suggestion to his leadership.
- The annual Penalty Workgroup meeting will be held soon, expect an email, staff is looking at mid June. Current TFAC members include Robert T. Brown, Bill Sieling, Bill Scerbo and Rachel Fazenbaker, four commissioners from SFAC will also be involved.
- The department requests comment from the commission on fisheries-related items it is currently scoping and proposing. Please review your handouts and send your comments to Jacob Holtz ([jacob.holtz@maryland.gov](mailto:jacob.holtz@maryland.gov)). Additionally, the items reviewed during the meeting will be posted on [the department website](#) requesting public comment, please share with your constituents.
- Commissioners should expect an email from the department concerning the proposed regulation that would create a no-cost declaration of intent for shellfish dealers who purchase oysters or clams for human consumption. The email will clarify whether or not those purchasing from a dealer (for retail purposes) will also be required to declare.

- Please review the [Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Winter Meeting \(Feb. 4-5, 2025\) information](#) for agenda items. Spiny dogfish, horseshoe crab, and striped bass are the species in which actions may be taken.
- Based upon a discussion surrounding the Mid Bay Restoration Project, Rachael Gilde with the Maryland Port Authority will share the reef plan, once it is better developed, with the commission for its feedback, stay tuned.
- The department stated it was against harvesting clams from restricted areas for the bait industry, due to human health concerns. The commission requested this topic be thoroughly discussed at a future meeting before the department makes a decision. The department agreed to take part in a discussion on this topic at the next commission meeting.
- The Blue Crab Advisory Committee will work through the boat day off topic as it relates to commercial crabbing before moving a recommendation to the commission. There are some details to work through before a decision is made on whether or not scope a change in the current regulation. As the regulation stands, the vessel must take off the day of the vessel's owner, so if a vessel is jointly owned and they take off alternating days - they must currently take off two days. DNR Response: *If anyone would like to work with staff to come up with a formula to present to the committee before it meets, please contact the department, it would save a lot of time during the committee meeting.* Rachel Dean stated she supplied the department with language to kick off the discussion.

### **Motions:**

- *Commission approves January 23, 2025 meeting actions and motions.* Motion by Bill Rice, seconded by Bill Scerbo. Vote: No objections. Approved.

### **Awareness:**

- Katherine (Kate) Charbonneau, formally from the Maryland Critical Area Commission, is the Assistant Secretary for Aquatics Since January 2025. Kate brings 19 years of experience with the state to the position. Kate can be reached at [kathrine.charbonneau@maryland.gov](mailto:kathrine.charbonneau@maryland.gov).
- Maryland Outdoors, the state's new licensing system under development, was presented by Jeff Roberts with Brandt Information Systems (vendor developing system). Commissioners are encouraged to submit questions and suggestions for the system, contact Paul ([paul.genovese@maryland.gov](mailto:paul.genovese@maryland.gov)). Will come back in the future as new features are unveiled.
- For inquiries on the Mid-Chesapeake Bay Restoration Project please contact Rachael Gilde with the Maryland Port Administration ([rgilde@marylandports.com](mailto:rgilde@marylandports.com)). The presentation is included with the [meeting presentations file](#) located online.
- The NRP received approximately 1,200 applicants for its next recruiting class which is set to begin academy training on June 25. This number has been drawn down to 125 and interviews and polygraphs are now being conducted which may bring the number of applicants to about 65 individuals. Then, those remaining will be interviewed by senior staff. The goal is to fill about 18 positions in addition to possibly a few unexpected vacancies in the recent months. There will be approximately nine new cadets and nine laterals (those coming from other agencies).
- Concerning US Wind, fisheries compensation mitigation, and meetings related to the topic, go to <https://dnr.maryland.gov/ccs/Pages/fisheries-compensatory-mitigation.aspx>. A thank you from Commissioner Gwin to the department and Michale Luisi for all the work that was done on behalf of the coastal commercial fisheries.
- Assistant Secretary Charbonneau presented FABS budget information: FABS total published budget for FY26 is \$39.4 million, FY25 was \$33 million. Some of this total budget includes federal funds and a good part of the increase is due to the influx of grants, including for oyster restoration. Federal funds via Sport Fish Restoration continue to make up roughly 10% of the unit's budget. As of now, changes to the federal

funding stream are not anticipated as it is supported (nationwide) by manufacturers' excise taxes on sport fishing equipment, import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats, and the portion of the gasoline fuel tax attributable to small engines and motorboats.

- There may be potential significant impacts to NOAA's budget, this is being monitored and the department is staying in touch with its NOAA partners. If there are changes that impact fisheries and our fisheries-related industries, including stock assessments and surveys related to Maryland, the department will share that information.
- No motions from the Invasive Catfish Advisory Committee were presented to the commission.
- The Chair gave a quick update on the salmon farm in Cecil County, please contact Steve Lay if you have questions on the proposed farm. Robert T. Brown announced the Maryland Watermen's Association is not in favor of the Salmon farm possibly operating in Maryland.

**Meeting Recording:**

- <https://archive.org/details/meeting-of-the-tidal-fisheries-advisory-commission-2025-04-17-12-48-edt-recording>

**Next Scheduled Meeting Date:**

- July 17, 2025 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.