

Bureau of Fisheries
Division of Fish Production Services
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December 13, 2005

A. C. Carpenter, Chair
Shad and River Herring Management Board
PO Box 9
Colonial Beach, Virginia 22443

Re: VMRC proposal to allow legal by-catch of American shad in Virginia waters of the Chesapeake Bay, dated July 27, 2005.

Dear Mr. Carpenter:

The Shad and River Herring Technical Committee (TC) met on October 5, 2005 to discuss, among other agenda items, VMRC's proposal to allow harvest of 20 American shad per day by any registered Virginia commercial fisherman using anchored or staked gill nets, pound nets, haul seines, or fyke nets in the Chesapeake Bay or its tributaries. This proposal is similar to a 2003 proposal to allow Virginia Commercial fishers to harvest amounts equal to 10%, by weight, of their daily aggregate catch of all finfish species.

In evaluating the 2003 proposal, members expressed concerns that the proposal included mixed stocks, included pound nets where, presumably, the bycatch could be released unharmed, had the potential to harvest a substantial number of fish, and had the potential to impact other stocks that are under intensive restoration. The 2005 proposal addressed none of the concerns expressed by the TC in 2003. In addition, the TC noted that the harvest projections for the 2005 proposal were based on 1993, a year when shad populations were low, suggesting that harvest under this proposal may be substantially higher than predicted. The TC wondered why harvest would be allowed from haul seine catches, since releasing shad unharmed from a haul seine seems a reasonable approach. The TC also noted that the proposal included no plans to evaluate otoliths for tags to determine if hatchery restoration programs were being impacted. The TC reached consensus recommendation is that the Management Board reject the VMRC proposal for the above reasons.

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Sincerely,

Michael L. Hendricks, Chair
Shad and River Herring Technical Committee

cc: L. Munger
Technical Committee members
J. G. Travelstead

