

18 Mar 2015

Meeting Notes #2: Teleconference 18 Mar 2015 Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association

General. The first open teleconference meeting was conducted on 18 Mar 2015. Mike Avery and Kevin Smith opened the meeting. All attendees introduced themselves. Mike went over meeting notes #1 which covered initial impressions, possible name of the organization, website domain, broad mission statement, fund raising, interim board member recruitment, and the way ahead. The teleconference was recorded and can be accessed only by phone by dialing 712-775-7029 meeting #1.

Initial impressions. The responses have been mostly favorable. Some indicated this has been tried and failed. Some want to see more goals and objectives before saying they can support. Some believe a strong local chapter in a national organization is better. But the vast majority of the responses received have been positive stating they would support such an organization. The initial impression is we should move forward to establish an organization to represent Virginia saltwater anglers. The question was asked should this organization also include fresh water anglers and after a short discussion it was concluded that fresh water anglers face an entirely separate set of challenges than saltwater anglers therefore it would best to focus just on saltwater (for now).

Name of the organization. The initial consensus is that Virginia needs its own organization not a chapter within a national organization. The major concern is any dues or funds raised should stay in Virginia and not go to support a national organization. Various names were discussed in meeting #1 and everyone seemed to agree that the best option on the table so far is Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association (VSSA). Similar name to the successful the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association (MSSA) but perhaps slightly different focus. The MSSA has numerous local chapters and do events and tournaments. We feel much of what the MSSA does perhaps replicates what a local Virginia fishing club might do. We feel the Virginia fishing clubs are strong and do not want to try to create an organization that compete or replicates what a local fishing club does. This topic will be addressed again in the next meeting.

Possible website. [Jerry Aycock](#) said he can do the hosting and web design on a volunteer basis. Jerry is a local angler and runs a successful web design company and involved in many local fishing clubs and activities. Jerry is currently looking at possible domain names to support the VSSA. More to follow on a possible website. Once the website is established, social media sites can be created around this site to support it. The website should provide a good way for members to see all the data on the various finfish (provided by the finfish committee chair) and a real-time, virtual polling/voting option that allows all standing members to be able to vote on various options for the given fish. We want complete transparency so everyone can see how many (not necessary who) but what numbers are supporting various options. The number 1 goal of this organization will be communication to each member on what is happening out there for the various fish and to be able to participate in forming the positions on deciding the future of those fish. This allows the VSSA to attend meetings and represent positions with numbers of anglers state-wide.

Mission. Here are the discussed top level mission of the VSSA (Not necessarily in order).

- Represent the interest of Virginia's recreational saltwater anglers.

- Communicate with all members of the VSSA in both directions. Communication will be a high priority to ensure input is received from VSSA members to represent those positions of anglers. Keep all members informed of all fishery related issue and represent the positions of VSSA member at the various local, state, and federal levels.
- Protect Virginia marine, boat and tackle industry jobs.
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of Virginia's fisheries. Fight hard against unsustainable and damaging fishing such as any fishing done on an industrial scale that damages our fishery and ecosystem.
- Support and maintain communication with local Virginia fishing clubs so they remain strong.

Some discussion centered on this organization should not start out with any specific agenda items and start with an open slate with the broad mission statement. Everyone agreed in principal with this and even mentioning Omega was removed from the goal statements. Everyone did agree to fight against unsustainable fishing practices as a generic goal.

Fund raising. At some point in time, we will need to raise funds in order to have a viable organization. When the VSSA begins to solicit funds for support, all accounts established will be open to several board members for complete visibility to ensure any funds raised are protected and used only for purposes approved by the board. We don't want anyone who might contribute to feel their donated funds will be used for the wrong reasons.

Recruiting others for the "interim" board. In order to be successful, the VSSA must recruit volunteers willing to serve in various capacities. The initial slate of board members will serve as "interim" board members until such a time in the future formal elections can be held in accordance with by-laws approved by the interim board members. All positions are unpaid, volunteer position. It is anticipated that the initial slate will be simply any person willing to step forward to volunteer their time until elections can be held. Key to this organization we feel will be the fishery advisors whose main function is to know everything about the species, any meetings, any actions to change limits, gather input from members, and to keep members informed of those activities. The initial slate of officers may look something like:

President
 Vice President
 Secretary
 Public Affairs
 Treasurer
 Fishing Club Liaison
 Legal
 Fishery Advisor Chair
 Co-Chair: Flounder
 Co-Chair: Drum (Black and Red)
 Co-Chair: Trout
 Co-Chair: Tile, Grouper and other deep drop species.
 Co-Chair: BSB, Tog
 Co-Chair: Striped Bass
 Co-Chair: Cobia

Co-Chair: Sheepshead, spade
Co-Chair: Offshore Palegics

During the meeting several volunteered to serve as board members. So far we have 8 volunteers. We would like to have at least 10, **therefore looking for at least 2 more to volunteer.** These initial board members are all equals with the generic title of “interim board member” until such a time in the future we can have elections where board members may or may not run for certain positions and be elected. As of 18 Mar 2015 the board members are:

Mike Avery
Kevin Smith
Bob Reed
John Bello
Steve Quigley
Jerry Aycock
Dr. Bob Allen
Doug Ochsenknecht

Way Ahead. We will try to have weekly meetings until things are a bit more solidified. We will alternate between a board meeting one week and an open meeting the next. For now meetings will be virtual to avoid travel since many volunteers are widely scattered. We will continue to use the free conference call service until such a time meeting hosting service can be found. The next meeting will be a board meeting planned for **Thursday, 26 March 2015 7 – 8 pm.** Dial in number: 712-775-7031, Meeting ID code: 268-591-500.

Meeting notes approved by: Interim Board Members