

7 Mar 2015

Meeting Notes #1 Exploratory Options Virginia Fishing Association.

Background. Discussions on various message boards and social media indicate that Virginia lacks a State-wide organization to represent the interests of recreational saltwater anglers. While several National organizations exist such as CCA, RFA, and others, and there are even local chapters of these national organizations, there appears to be no organization to represent Virginia anglers. A few recreational anglers got together to do some explorations on whether such a state-wide organization is needed and would be supported by anglers. Various posts on fishing message boards, such as tidalfish and facebook was put there to see there is such interest. One such thread is [located here](#).

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. Responses can be found on the internet threads and many were sent to this email address: keepvafishing@averys.net.

Initial meeting 6 Mar 2015. Mike Avery and Kevin Smith discussed a possible way ahead for this new organization. The following topics were discussed. Please note: At this point this is just 2 guys talking trying gather input. Nothing is locked in and all thoughts, opinions, and recommendations are very welcome.

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 but 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. The name is not locked in stone and other names can be considered if better alternatives are suggested. If anyone has a name recommendation, please respond.

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). These are just the initial thoughts at a top level mission statement. Thoughts and recommendations are welcome.

- 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.
- Represent the interest of Virginia's recreational saltwater anglers.
- 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 the Omega menhaden operation and any fishing done on an industrial scale that damages our fishery.
- Support and maintain communication with local Virginia fishing clubs so they remain strong.

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

Meeting notes approved by: Mike Avery and Kevin Smith