



COMMITTEE REPORTS



JOINT MEETING OF THE MFC COMMERCIAL RESOURCES FUND COMMITTEE & THE FUNDING COMMITTEE FOR THE N. C. COMMERCIAL FISHING RESOURCE FUND



ROY COOPER
Governor

MICHAEL S. REGAN
Secretary

JOHN G. BATHERSON
Acting Director

January 28, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: William Brantley, Grants Program Manager, Administrative and Maintenance Services Section

SUBJECT: October 27, 2020 Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Committee Meeting

Issue

The N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Funding Committee met jointly with the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Committee at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 27, 2020 on WebEx to review and vote on funding opportunities from their Comprehensive and Public Relations request for proposals (RFP).

Findings

The joint committees reviewed and approved the following proposals:

- **UNC-W [\$112,905]** - Assessment of the Impact of Gear Modifications on Diamondback Terrapin and Blue Crab Catch in the NC commercial Crab
- **Maureen Donald [\$63,330]** – The Science Behind Your Local Seafood
- **SA Cherokee [\$800,000]** – NC Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Public Relations Campaign
- **Coastal Carolina Riverwatch (Crystal Coast Waterkeeper) [134,821.40]** – Water Quality for Fisheries: Building Stakeholder and Public Support for Improved Water Quality in NC
- **NC Coastal Federation [\$115,599]** – Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project for NC Waters
- **NC State University [\$340,735]** – Determine the Cause and Impact of Disease on Sustainable Oyster Resources
- **UNC-Chapel Hill IMS [\$207,147]** – Determining Nutrient Controls on Phytoplankton Production and Harmful Algal Blooms in Albemarle Sound

[Full meeting minutes are included in this meeting packet.](#)

Action Needed.

For informational purposes only, **no action is needed at this time.**



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MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Commercial Resource Fund Committee and the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund

FROM: William Brantley, Grants Program Manager
Division of Marine Fisheries, NCDEQ

DATE: November 27, 2020

SUBJECT: MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee and Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Meeting Minutes

The MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee and the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund met at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 27, 2020 through Webex. The following attended:

MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee: Chairman Doug Cross, Sam Romano, Mike Blanton

Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Members: Chairman Ernest Doshier, Glenn Skinner, Steve Weeks, and Doug Todd.

Partial Attendance: Britton Shackleford (present during *Issues from Commissioners* portion of agenda)

Absent: Gilbert Baccus

Public Comment: Public comment was received through webpage and US mail

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chairman Doug Cross called the meeting to order for the MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee and inquired to any conflicts of interest. None were noted. Chairman Ernest Doshier called the meeting to order for the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund. Chairman Doshier asked Brantley to read the conflict of interest reminder, then inquired to any conflicts of interest. None were noted. Brantley conducted a roll call for both Committees. All members were present from the MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee. At the time of the roll call for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Committee, all members were present with the exception of Shackleford and Baccus.

The meeting agenda was then reviewed.

Motion by Romano to approve the agenda. Second by Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through a roll call vote.

Motion by Skinner to approve the agenda. Second by Weeks. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Minutes from the July 30, 2020 MFC Commercial Resource Fund (CRF) Committee meeting and the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund were reviewed.

Motion by Skinner to approve the July 30, 2020 meeting minutes. Second by Todd. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Motion by Romano to approve July 30, 2020 meeting minutes. Second by Cross. Motion passed in the “Aye” from Romano and Cross. Blanton had connectivity problems and did not vote.

Brantley briefed the committees on points from Session Law 2020-3 and read into the minute’s a history of their Request for Proposals (RFP) process for the 2020/2021 fiscal year. Brantley stated that the committees had met to review and approve funding opportunities from their Comprehensive and Public Relations Request for Proposals (RFP) based on approved objectives from past meetings. Applicant’s will receive award letters or letters of regret, depending on how the Committee’s vote. Reasons given by the committee’s for not funding proposals will be summarized for letters of regret.

Brantley also stated that a final report from a previously funded grant, financial report, public comment, and an email received for the Committee’s consideration were included in their meeting packet.

CFRF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) REVIEW

UNC-W: Assessment of the impact of gear modifications on diamondback terrapin and blue crab catch in the North Carolina commercial crab fishery. \$112,905

Chairmen Cross and Doshier asked for members to review a proposal from UNC-W on bycatch reduction of diamondback terrapin. Romano discussed current research that had been on-going with UNC-W regarding terrapin research, and gear modifications which he has assisted with. Cross expressed concerns that the industry would face if it didn’t act to invest in addressing the issue. Romano stated that he would abstain from a vote. Blanton discussed field testing of the pot designs. Romano summarized that funding this proposal would provide special interest groups insight that the industry is investing in reduction of terrapin bycatch. Skinner stated that the gear trials may assist in understanding how the gear modifications would affect crab catch rates. Romano stated that he wanted to get the on-going UNC-W research to the DMF Director’s office. Blanton and Cross discussed implementing the proposal as-written, and possible implementation of the research.

Motion by Skinner to approve the UNC-Wilmington terrapin bycatch reduction device research. Second by Todd. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Motion by Blanton to approve the UNC-Wilmington terrapin bycatch reduction device research. Second by Cross. Motion passed in the “Aye” by Blanton and Cross. Romano abstained.

AdFarm: *The Greatest Catch: Capturing North Carolina’s Public Support.* \$794,975

Skinner stated that AdFarm had provided a substantial proposal that was similar in structure to what they were currently funding, but they had provided an extra focus to reach out to a younger demographic which was beneficial. Skinner questioned the agency’s current familiarization with the industry. Cross stated that the approach was very similar in nature to what they were currently funding. Blanton stated that the proposal offered appealing aspects and options, especially with the younger demographic. Blanton also expressed concerns that there would be duplicate measures in the budget that had already been funded through the current PR firm, contracted by the Committee’s.

Motion by Skinner to not approve the AdFarm proposal. Second by Todd. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Motion by Blanton to not approve the AdFarm proposal. Second by Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.

Donald: *The Science Behind Your Local Seafood.* \$63,330

Skinner stated Maureen Donald had an intriguing proposal that had a much lower budget and asked for other Committee opinions. Weeks stated that she had familiarization with the industry through past work, and the proposal fits in the message of other industry groups. Blanton agreed with the Funding Committee, but had concerns about the delivery of the proposal. Blanton followed up with noting content delivery is an important aspect to consider with these projects. Cross stated that Donald had established relationships with current industry media sources, but a follow up on the delivery method may need to occur. Blanton questioned the title of the project with how it relates to the work proposed. Romano said he had experience with Donald and her familiarization and ability to network within the industry. Romano was appreciative of the budget conscious proposal.

Motion by Weeks to fund the Maureen Donald proposal. Second by Skinner. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Further discussion occurred over to the title of the project and plan of deliverables. Members discussed conditional stipulations for funding the contract, such as the messaging strategy and modifications of the title. Skinner asked for clarification on making changes to the proposal. Govoni stated that members could add a condition to the contract, however, DMF’s recommendation was that the members should take caution to how they provide the opportunity to permit applicants to change things in their proposal. Weeks stated that the Committee’s

should consider the proposal as-is. Skinner reminded the Committees that there was a mechanism to consider if the separate Committee's could not agree on a decision.

Motion by Romano to fund the Maureen Donald proposal. Second by Cross. Motion passed in the "Aye" with Romano and Cross. Blanton voted "No."

French West Vaughan: Campaign for Support of Commercial Fishing in N.C. \$400,000

At the request of Chairman Cross, Skinner opened discussion on the proposal, stating that it was similar to the AdFarm proposal and current contract funded for the PR program, but this proposal had a greater focus on research. Skinner stated one of his concerns for this proposal were that the applicant, in their proposal, had implemented working with DMF experts to research topics. Skinner mentioned that he was unsure if the applicants knew who they would be working with, or if the Committees would be obligating the DMF to work with the firm if they approved it. Skinner referenced that the approach was more focused on DMF versus the Committees.

Motion by Skinner to not approve the French West Vaughan proposal. Second by Todd. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Cross concurred that it was a good proposal, but had concerns over the approach re-instituting objectives that they have already completed. Blanton said that he was concerned that the Committee's would be paying for items that they have already paid for previously, however, it was a valid proposal.

Motion by Romano to not fund the French West Vaughan proposal. Second by Cross. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.

PeRfect Plan: (No title offered). \$285,000

Chairman Doshier opened the discussion with concerns over the budget and scope. Skinner agreed, and noted that the applicant wanted to conduct an economic impact study which was already taking place. Additionally, Skinner noted that the applicant had proposed working directly with DMF staff to develop reporting features, and was not sure that the applicant was clear on who the client was. Brantley asked that if the collective issues with the proposal were based on the scope, the knowledge of available data sources, the project's design and technical approach, and clarity of objects. Skinner agreed, and also noted that this would incur work that has already been funded.

Motion by Skinner to not approve the PeRfect Plan proposal. Second by Weeks. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Chairman Cross agreed with Skinner, and did not feel comfortable obligating the DMF without consulting with them first.

Motion by Romano to deny funding the PeRfect Plan proposal. Second by Cross. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.

S&A Cherokee: North Carolina Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Public Relations Campaign. \$840,000

Skinner opened the conversation, and stated that he was satisfied with the work they had received from this firm on the previous contract. Skinner stated that he receives a lot of requests to utilize the product. Skinner noted he could provide an update on the 6-month extension if anyone was interested. Doshier stated that the incumbent firm had established a product that was working well. Brantley asked if the committees felt comfortable with the approach, budget, and technical approach. Skinner agreed and discussed the budget. Cross asked about the budget and the Year 2 and Year 3 costs broken out. Skinner stated that this proposal would be a two-year proposal for \$420,000 each year. Brantley reminded the Committees that the RFP published had a stipulation that project costs could not exceed \$400,000 annually. Blanton noted the proposal had exceeded the limit and was concerning. Cross asked could the motion be amended to reflect costs to not exceed \$400,000. Todd asked if this was asking the applicant to change their project and resubmit. Govoni clarified that this was not, this could be issued as an award with a condition. Skinner asked that if the applicant does not agree to meet the conditions of the award, that the Committee's were not obligated to fund the proposal. Govoni agreed.

Motion by Skinner to fund the S&A Cherokee proposal for two years with the condition that they do not exceed the \$400,000 per year limit. Second by Todd. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Cross stated the firm had done an excellent job, and hopes to see further networking by the them. Romano issued concerns over the budget, and would abstain from the vote due to feeling uncomfortable the level of funding requested. Blanton also stated concerns about the funding amounts.

Motion by Blanton to fund the S&A Cherokee proposal for two years with the condition that they do not exceed the \$400,000 per year limit. Second by Cross. Motion passed in the "Aye" by Blanton and Cross. Romano abstained.

WRAL: North Carolina Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Public Relations Campaign. \$390,000

Doshier noted concerns about the objectives in the proposal, and that they referenced working with the DMF instead of the Committees throughout the proposal. Skinner said the merits of the proposal were concerning, and the organization had previously published material that could have had a negative effect on the industry. Weeks also noted concerns about the organization. Brantley asked for further clarification on objective comments related to the proposal. Weeks stated that the applicant targeted the proposal to the Marine Fisheries Commission. Weeks also noted concern over the objectives in the proposal.

Motion by Weeks to not fund the WRAL proposal. Second by Todd. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Cross agreed with the Funding Committee that the applicant was not clear who the client was, and their objectives in the proposal. Blanton stated that the applicant offered a different approach than the other proposals with their outreach base, however, did not feel they understood who the client was.

Motion by Blanton to not fund the WRAL proposal. Second by Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Albemarle Resource Conservation and Development Council: *Little River Watershed Water Quality Improvement.* \$78,100

Blanton opened the conversation by discussing that he felt that the Committee's should consider projects that would achieve a broader impact on water quality. Doshier expressed concern that this proposal would be completed on private land. Cross agreed with Blanton that projects should be for broader areas to improve larger watersheds, or sound-based areas. Cross also concurred with Doshier that he had concerns committing stakeholder funds to private land. Skinner stated that their Committees should look for projects with larger impacts with the resources available to the Committees. Skinner felt the scale was too small, and that the actionable results upon conclusion were concerning.

Motion by Skinner to not approve the Albemarle Resource Conservation and Development Council proposal. Second by Todd. Motion passed in the "Aye" by Doshier, Todd, and Skinner, with Weeks voting "No."

Blanton stated the scope and impact from this proposal were minimal, and the costs were concerning for the funding requested. Blanton agreed that this may have merit, but on a larger scale.

Motion by Romano to not approve the Albemarle Resource Conservation and Development Council proposal. Second by Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.

Bertie County: *TGOW – Albemarle Sound Water Quality Enhancement.* \$36,000

Doshier opened the conversation, and noted concerns that this project seemed to focus on creating recreational access. Doshier noted that water quality monitoring was a topic, and the State should be conducting these measures. Romano echoed previous concerns over the smaller area impact. Blanton felt this was leisure-area based, and may not address the legislative intent of the Commercial Fishing Resource Fund. Skinner reiterated the impact that this project would have on water quality for the State. Weeks noted this project appears this is more of a recreational project and not necessarily within the scope of the Fund, however stated that water quality would benefit the fisheries.

Motion by Romano to not approve the Bertie County proposal. Second by Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.

Motion by Skinner to not approve the Bertie County proposal. Second by Weeks. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Coastal Carolina Riverwatch (Crystal Coast Waterkeeper): *Water Quality for Fisheries: Building Stakeholder and Public Support for Improved Water Quality in North Carolina.* \$134,821.40

Doshier opened the conversation with concerns over the budget relative to proposed meeting costs and office space fees. Skinner told the Committees that he had spoken with the applicants,

and liked the aspect of stakeholder input and public education. Weeks liked the objectives and educational components of the proposal, but noted the budget was high. Todd concurred with the aforementioned expenses, but thought the proposal was beneficial.

Motion by Skinner to approve the Crystal Coast Waterkeeper proposal. Second by Weeks. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Cross expressed issues with the budget of the proposal. Romano addressed the broader scope of this proposal, and questioned the final intent. Skinner stated that in conversations with the applicant, that the intent was to address water quality issues now and in the future. Blanton noted the benefits of the broader scope of this application as compared to other proposals received.

Motion by Blanton to approve the Crystal Coast Waterkeeper proposal. Second by Cross. Motion passed in the “Aye” by Blanton and Cross, with Romano abstaining.

Currituck County: *Sampling & Monitoring Impaired Water in Coinjock, NC.* \$18,480

Blanton opened the discussion by noting the small scale of the project, and lack of action by the proposal. Cross stated that the NCDEQ had listed the waters as impaired for recreational, and may not address the legislative intent of the Fund.

Motion by Blanton to not approve the Currituck County proposal. Second by Cross. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.

Motion by Skinner to not approve the Currituck County proposal. Second by Weeks. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

North Carolina Coastal Federation: *Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project North Carolina Waters.* \$115,599

Blanton opened the conversation and noted that the General Assembly formerly funded this project, and the Committees should now look at funding this proposal. Blanton stated this was worthy of funding, and this project would be close to meeting deadlines for implementation. Cross concurred, and stated that the industry bears responsibility for keeping the waterways clean. Romano agreed.

Motion by Blanton to approve the N.C. Coastal Federation proposal. Second by Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.

Motion by Skinner to approve the N.C. Coastal Federation proposal. Second by Todd. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

N.C. State University: *Determine the cause and impact of disease on sustainable oyster resources.* \$340,735

Cross stated this proposal had a high budget, but this would assist in identifying what was killing oysters. Cross also noted that this would assist most areas of the state, and mentioned the array of collaborators in the project. Blanton addressed the quantity of oysters that were once

available, and also noted the reviewers notes on the proposal. Skinner discussed the dead zone in the Neuse River, and former discussion with the applicant on potential pathologic concerns in that area, thus research was needed for the industry. Romano praised the proposal for targeting wild-caught oysters, however noted concerns about the proposed results. Weeks stated that this would assist in diagnosing problems in order to correct them. Skinner noted budget concerns as well. Weeks stated he was aware of large die offs of oysters in the past, and research needed to occur to identify what was causing them. Skinner questioned the research timelines in the proposal, and Weeks noted that die offs often occurred during the early summer.

**Motion by Romano to approve the N.C. State University proposal. Second by Cross.
Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Skinner to approve the N.C. Coastal Federation proposal. Second by Weeks.
Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.**

UNC Chapel Hill Institute of Marine Sciences: *Determining nutrient controls on phytoplankton production and harmful algal blooms in Albemarle Sound.* \$207,147.

Blanton opened discussion by noting this study deals with the Albemarle Sound area, and it addressed part of the CHPP Committee's objectives. Blanton also noted that this would benefit all coastal stakeholders, and the budget was reasonable for the benefits that could come from the study. Skinner agreed with Blanton, and praised the applicant for his history of water quality issues. Skinner stated this would be a direct benefit to commercial fishermen.

**Motion by Blanton to approve funding for the UNC-IMS proposal. Second by Cross.
Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Todd to approve the N.C. Coastal Federation proposal. Second by Skinner.
Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.**

ISSUES FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cross asked about a future meeting, and Brantley stated the Chairmen may want to consider a meeting before the end of the calendar year. Cross asked about the next funding cycle, and Cross further stated that he wanted to look for research on bycatch reduction.

Doshier noted an interest in research on the predatory practices of cormorants, with further conversation by Weeks and Skinner. Skinner stated he had a lot of interest from stakeholders on the issue, and he believed that the NC Wildlife Resources Commission could approve measures to limit the population in NC.

Skinner stated that the Committees should consider proposals to assist the For-Hire industry.

Weeks asked for discussion for the external usage of the PR campaign, and potentially appointing a member(s) to review usage of the material. Skinner added that a process was needed and should be an agenda item at the next meeting, noting an email from NC Catch representatives.

Blanton stated he would like the Committees to revisit problems with blue catfish, and this should be considered during the next RFP. Skinner suggested that the MFC members consider a Fishery Management Plan for blue catfish.

Romano noted oysters and restoration of the fishery, and mentioned research that is looking at alternative substrate to set oyster spat. The Committee's may want to consider funding opportunities for this.

Britton Shackleford joined the meeting.

Doshier and Shackleford elaborated on the cormorant issue. Shackleford stated that the predation issues with cormorants and sharks have become a problem.

Skinner and Doshier thanked DMF staff for administering the meeting. Cross thanked both DMF staff, and the members of the committees.

Motion by Romano to adjourn. Second by Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.

Motion by Skinner to adjourn. Second by Todd. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.

Meeting adjourned.

WB

DRAFT