



# COMMITTEE REPORTS



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

MICHAEL S. REGAN  
*Secretary*

STEPHEN W. MURPHEY  
*Director*

June 31, 2020

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

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

**SUBJECT:** Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Committee Meeting

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### Issue

The N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Funding Committee met jointly with the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Committee at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, June 3, 2020 by webinar to review and vote on objectives to include in a request for proposals (RFP) document.

### Findings

The joint committees reviewed and approved two RFP's for publication, a comprehensive RFP and a public relations RFP.

1. **Comprehensive Request for Proposals** – This request for proposal is for several targeted research projects pertaining to blue catfish ecology and gear development; diamondback terrapin bycatch reduction devices; shrimp trawl bycatch reduction devices; water quality improvements; and the economic impact of the H-2B Visa program on the state's seafood industry.
2. **Public Relations Campaign** – This request for proposal is to continue a campaign to educate the public about North Carolina's sustainable commercial fishing industry and about commercial fishermen participation in research and measures the industry has taken to reduce its environmental impact.

The committees requested an additional statement of work from the current public relations vendor to extend the current project six months. Future RFP objectives were also discussed, and will be voted on at a later date.

The RFP application is published and available on the DMF webpage. Applications are due by 5 p.m. on July 15, 2020.

### Action Needed.

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

For more information, please refer to the [Draft CFRF Meeting Minutes](#) in this briefing book.



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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: June 8, 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 2 p.m. on Wednesday, June 3, 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, Gilbert Baccus, Britton Shackelford, and Doug Todd

Absent: N/A

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

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

William Brantley welcomed the Committee members and public to the Joint Meeting of the MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee and the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund.

Chairman Ernest Doshier called the meeting to order for the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund and inquired to any conflicts of interest. Chairman Doug Cross called the meeting to order for the MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee and inquired to any conflicts of interest. Brantley conducted a roll call, all members were present.

Brantley briefed the committees on points from Session Law 2020-3 and read into the minute's options for the committees to consider as they seek to approve a funding schedule for projects

from the Fund. Brantley also noted that public comment had been received prior to the meeting and copies had been sent to members. The meeting agenda was then reviewed.

**Mike Blanton made a motion to approve the agenda with a second by Sam Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Glenn Skinner made a motion to approve the agenda. Gilbert Baccus seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

Minutes from the January 14, 2020 MFC Commercial Resource Fund (CRF) Committee meeting and the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund were reviewed.

**Blanton made a motion to approve the minutes, with a second from Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Skinner made a motion to approve the minutes with these changes. Baccus seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

### **CFRF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) REVIEW**

#### **Public Relations Campaign**

Chairman Cross asked for members to discuss a continuation of the CFRF Public Relations (PR) campaign by asking the vendor to provide a revised statement of work. Skinner led the discussion among members and asked for committee member input. Chairman Cross recommended the requested statement of work remain within the boundaries of the current contract's scope. Brantley stated that DMF would seek approval from the Department of Environmental Quality for contract approval.

**Motion by Glenn Skinner to request a proposal and statement of work for a 6-month extension of the current contract with 50% of the budget from 2020 under the current guidelines. Seconded by Steve Weeks. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Mike Blanton to request a proposal and statement of work for a 6-month extension of the current contract with 50% of the budget from 2020 under the current guidelines. Seconded by Sam Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

Chairman Cross then called on Skinner to discuss asking the Division to draft a separate RFP just for the CFRF PR project. Brantley asked for the committees to define terms for funding and renewal processes. Blanton discussed annual funding limits for the project.

**Motion by Glen Skinner to request a proposal for a public relations campaign and allocate up to \$400,000 annually with an option for CFRF committees to renew for one additional year. Seconded by Doug Todd. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Sam Romano to request a proposal for a public relations campaign and allocate up to \$400,000 annually with an option for CFRF committees to renew for one additional year. Seconded by Mike Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

### **Diamondback Terrapin Research**

Chairman Cross opened discussion regarding diamondback terrapin research, a topic that was also heavily discussed at the May 2020 MFC meeting. This objective would be included in the comprehensive RFP the Division drafted. Romano stated that putting out the RFP would open the door to anyone that is interested in conducting the research, some of which is already underway.

**Motion by Glenn Skinner to approve the Target Species Diamondback Terrapin objective. Seconded by Steve Weeks. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Mike Blanton to approve the Target Species Diamondback Terrapin objective. Seconded by Sam Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

### **Blue Catfish Invasiveness**

Blanton issued concerns regarding blue catfish due to their implications in North Carolina's waters. Romano asked Blanton to define potential goals from this research. Blanton stated that regulatory issues can hamper targeting the species. Chairman Cross and Blanton discussed reviewing opportunities or novel suggestions that would allow effort to target the catfish.

**Motion by Mike Blanton to approve the Target Blue Catfish Objective as written. Seconded by Sam Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Gilbert Baccus to approve the Target Blue Catfish Objective as written. Seconded by Glenn Skinner. Motion passed with the following members voting Aye: Ernie Doshier, Doug Todd, Glenn Skinner, Steve Weeks, Gilbert Baccus. Britton Shackelford lost connection to the Webex meeting was not able to vote.**

### **Shrimp Bycatch Reduction**

Chairman Cross stated this was an effort to continuously develop and evaluating bycatch reduction devices. Romano inquired about adding research into this objective to study bottom productivity and trawling. Chairman Cross asked to discuss bottom productivity research later in the meeting for objectives in a future RFP. Brantley stated that the intent of this drafted objective was an effort to capture an approved motion made by Skinner at the January meeting in order to address bycatch efforts by smaller vessels.

**Motion by Sam Romano to approve the Target Species Shrimp and/or Bycatch. Seconded by Mike Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Glenn Skinner to approve the Target Species Shrimp and/or Bycatch. Seconded by Steve Weeks. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

### **Water Quality**

Blanton stated that degraded water quality and blue catfish could have linkages, and may have a connection in the Albemarle Sound. Water quality issues effect all user groups. Chairman Cross suggested adding blue catfish into the list of concerns drafted within the objective. Blanton

stated that he had seen water quality degradation in the Albemarle Sound, and would be interested in seeing if there was a nexus to nutrient loading and blue catfish populations.

**Motion by Mike Blanton to approve the objective target water quality, adding under the list of concerns that blue catfish interact with water quality. Seconded by Sam Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Glenn Skinner to approve the objective target water quality, adding under the list of concerns that blue catfish interact with water quality. Seconded by Gilbert Baccus. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

### **Economics – H2B Visa Program**

Chairman Cross discussed this objective to review the State’s H2B visa program for the State’s commercial fishing and seafood industry. Shackleford asked for clarification on this objective, and Cross stated that this study would be a vital stepping stone for discussion on the importance of the H2B Visa program in the future.

**Motion by Mike Blanton to approve Target Economics Objective, to investigate the importance of the H2B Visa program for seasonal foreign workers for the state’s commercial seafood industry. Second by Sam Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Steve Weeks to approve Target Economics Objective, to investigate the importance of the H2B Visa program for seasonal foreign workers for the state’s commercial seafood industry. Seconded by Glenn Skinner. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

### **Future RFP Objectives**

#### **Ecological Impacts and Area Towed**

Chairman Cross opened the floor for future RFP objectives. He asked members to consider a motion to review a determination of actual acreage towed by shrimp trawlers in NC. Skinner stated that acreage may be difficult to determine and may need to narrow the scope to the open bottom. Romano asked for the bottom impact and scope of the current shrimp trawl fishery to be added in. Weeks discussed previous scientific studies that reviewed ecological impacts of the trawl fishery. Shackleford asked about including joint waters.

**Motion by Sam Romano to request proposals that determine the actual percentage of open bottom towed by shrimp trawlers in North Carolina and the ecological impacts of shrimp trawling in North Carolina internal waters. Seconded by Mike Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Doug Todd to request proposals that determine the actual percentage of open bottom towed by shrimp trawlers in North Carolina and the ecological impacts of shrimp trawling in North Carolina internal waters. Seconded by Glenn Skinner. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

### **Bycatch Discards**

Chairman Cross stated that he wanted discussion to view the impacts of bycatch discards, from both recreational and commercial sectors. Blanton agreed with the need and stated this would be a robust study. Skinner inquired as to what types of discard should be included, and should this be quantitative or ecological. Interest was shown in how discards interact with productivity of the ecosystems.

**Motion by Sam Romano to request proposals for analysis of dead discards throughout the commercial and recreational fisheries and their impacts on the ecosystem. Seconded by Mike Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

Weeks expressed concern on the verbiage of dead discards only, and this may need to be expanded to include all discards. Brantley stated that the objective in the RFP could be worded to include different types of discards, and the committees would have the opportunity to review this objective for final approval before publishing.

**Motion by Glenn Skinner to request proposals for analysis of dead discards throughout the commercial and recreational fisheries and their impacts on the ecosystem. Seconded by Britton Shackelford. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

#### **Marine Debris / Crab Pot Cleanup**

Blanton asked about issuing a RFP for a crab pot cleanup program and was hoping this program would have been funded through appropriations. Blanton asked that under consideration of the history of the program, how could the committees consider the option for funding. Brantley encouraged the committees to consider the guidelines of their Administrative Procedures for Funding, and issue the request through a RFP.

**Motion by Mike Blanton to request a proposal for a marine debris/crab pot cleanup. Seconded by Sam Romano. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Glenn Skinner to request a proposal for a marine debris/crab pot cleanup. Seconded by Gilbert Baccus. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

#### **Non-Profit Establishment**

Romano stated concern that the Fund could be taken from the Committees through legislation, and asked for discussion for a request for proposals for the creation of a non-profit that could receive funding from the CFRF. Discussion centered around having a potential non-profit funded that could assist the commercial fishing industry through an emergency fund. Weeks questioned if this would be within the parameters of statute. Brantley suggested that this may not be within the purview of the Administrative Procedures, MOU, and Strategic Plan. Romano stated the efficiencies that this program could provide to the industry in emergent situations. Chairman Cross and Romano suggested that they could seek counsel on moving forward.

#### **NC Department of Agriculture Proposal**

Skinner inquired as to if the committees could request a direct proposal from the N.C. Department of Agriculture as it does with the Division of Marine Fisheries, or if that would need to occur through a RFP. Brantley stated that he could ask for guidance from the Department of Environmental Quality, however if Skinner would like to make the motion, he could follow up after it was voted on.

**Motion by Glenn Skinner to request a proposal from the N.C. Department of Agriculture to expand the state’s seafood marketing program. Second by Steve Weeks. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Motion by Sam Romano to request a proposal from the N.C. Department of Agriculture to expand the state’s seafood marketing program. Second by Mike Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

**Other Issues**

Chairman Cross and Chairman Doshier both stated that they felt additional meetings should be considered. Both Chairmen stated that the virtual meeting could make it easy to meet more often. Brantley stated that the Chairmen could call a meeting at their convenience.

**Adjournment**

**Motion by Doug Todd to adjourn. Second by Gilbert Baccus. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote.**

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

**Meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.**

WB



**N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Funding Committee  
N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Committee  
June 3, 2020 Meeting Online Comments**

<u>Submitted</u>	<u>Name:</u>	<u>City:</u>	<u>State:</u>	<u>Please type your comments in the box below.</u>
06/01/2020 - 4:31pm	Matt Huth	Wanchese	North Carolina	I am in support of using the Commercial Fishing Resource Fund to support the NC Coastal Federation's Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project. As a commercial fisherman, I feel this would be an excellent way to administer funds, that benefits habitat, water quality and puts fisherman to work. Hope this project is being considered. [REDACTED]
06/01/2020 - 4:28pm	Micah Daniels	Wanchese	North Carolina	I am in support of using the Commercial Fishing Resource Fund to support the NC Coastal Federation's Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project. I serve on the federation's advisory committee, and understand that a proposal has been submitted and is under consideration. [REDACTED]
06/01/2020 - 4:25pm	Sara Hallas	Manteo	North Carolina	Would like to request review of the N.C. Coastal Federation's Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project proposal that was tabled from the January meeting. Thank you for considering this request.
05/28/2020 - 10:22am	Joel Norris	Sneads Ferry	North Carolina	I thought the closing of New River from trawling might would have been a eye opener for everyone. I've been a commercial shrimper for 25 years and I've seen what happens when bottom gets closedown in N.C. I remember when 50-75 boats could go up New River and do good fishing now a half a dozen skimmers can't make a living up there. N.C. doesn't have the tide that states around us have so sediment covers the bottom and everything dies. There have been studies that prove that this a lot more living sea life in trawled bottom then nontrawled bottom. It's hard enough to make a living now. If any bottom is taken away from us we will probably be put out of business. Half of my living comes from pamlico sound and the ready off the beaches of Topsail. The places we trawl now is the only bottom the beach we can drag due to rocks. I keep hearing people say go outside 3 miles but there is no bottom off there that we can work. We've done everything that has been asked off us to reduce by catch and we done it and it has helped a lot. Now I hear that from us dragging the bottom it is releasing pollutants and that is what is killing fish. That is the dumbest thing I've ever heard. This isn't about bycatch its about some people be greedy and wanting the waters to themselves. Closing any trawling in N.C. will be the worst thing that could be done. So please don't take our way of making a living away from us because of some greedy people. Cause there is scientific studies proving we aren't hurting only helping. Thanks for your time

<u>Submitted</u>	<u>Name:</u>	<u>City:</u>	<u>State:</u>	<u>Please type your comments in the box below.</u>
05/28/2020 - 6:23am	Chris McCaffity	Morehead City	NC	Please use some of our license fees to set up an official website where we can purchase our commercial license without having to rely on snail mail or visiting a crowded office. The website should include a forum to discuss how our Commercial Fishing Resource Funds will be used and vote on different options. We should use modern technology to promote social distancing while giving all license holders a voice and vote.
05/27/2020 - 12:44pm	James Hargrove	Wilmington	NC	A good use of remaining funds would be to implement shellfish sanctuaries and the addition of shell material in tidal creeks around populated city centers. These creeks are the gateway to our sounds and where pollution is most concentrated before entering our waterways. Removing shellfish from these areas is counterproductive to the states water quality initiative and adding to the existing shell stock in these areas would increase their productivity and filtration capacity, thus sustaining a miraid of commercial fishing activities in the waters surrounding these creeks.