Pair Contribute to Caribbean Fisheries Management

VIMS Professor John Hoenig took part in the third annual Stock Assessment Meeting of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) on the island nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in July.

CRFM is an international treaty organization dedicated to wise use of fishery resources in the Caribbean.

Hoenig's graduate student Lynn Waterhouse also attended the meeting, to lay the groundwork for her planned study of queen conch *(Strombus gigas)*. These large marine snails, prized around the world for their edible meat and attractive shell, are declining in abundance throughout much of the Caribbean due to over-fishing and poaching.

Hoenig, who uses statistics, mathematical modeling, and computer simulations to determine appropriate management options for commercial and recreational fisheries, has served as a consultant to CRFM's annual stock assessment meetings since 2005.

He notes that CRFM has shown great interest in developing collaborative ties with VIMS, and vice versa. "We at VIMS are very excited about pursuing joint research efforts and educational opportunities with CRFM members," says Hoenig, who is now working with VIMS Dean and Director John Wells to establish a formal Memorandum of Understanding to encourage and guide a partnership with the organization.

Hoenig adds, "Lynn's study of queen conch provides a great example of the benefits of a research and educational partnership between CRFM and VIMS. Lynn will benefit by working with local experts on a real-life problem in fisheries management, and CRFM members will gain from the expertise we at VIMS have in quantitative assessment of fishery resources."

Queen conchs are particularly vulnerable to over-fishing because of their slow growth, late maturation, and tendency to aggregate in shallow water to spawn. In 1992, based on this vulnerability and documented population declines, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) added the species to their Appendix II, a list of organisms that may be threatened with extinction unless trade is strictly regulated. Queen conch was the first large-scale fisheries product to be regulated by CITES.

An Appendix II CITES listing regulates international trade through a system of permits designed to ensure that trade is legal and will not threaten the species' survival in the wild.

The U.S. currently prohibits import of queen conch (including meat, shells, and live animals) from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, and Trinidad and Tobago. All harvest in Florida and adjacent Federal waters has been banned since the mid-1980s.

Waterhouse plans to study the queen-conch fishery of the Turks and Caicos Islands, hoping to incorporate economic information into the assessment of fishery options and to document and share the management strategies of this well-managed fishery with other nations in the Caribbean.

This knowledge could help these nations resume trading queen conch with the U.S., which is responsible for 80% of the world's queen conch consumption. International trade is banned under CITES regulations until targeted nations implement specific long-term conservation measures to sustainably manage queen conch populations in their waters.

VIMS Professor John Hoenig (R) with members of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism during the organization's 3rd Annual Meeting in July. On the far left is Dr. Todd Gedamke, a recent VIMS Ph.D. now employed as a Research Fisheries Biologist with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center in Miami, Florida. Photo by Lynn Waterhouse.

2008 Art Show and Auction

April 25th and 26th, 2008

Mark your calendar for VIMS' 10th-annual Art Show and Auction, "Scenes From the Seas." This year's two-day event will feature renowned marine wildlife artist Dr. Guy Harvey (pictured below), a unique blend of scientist, conservationist, explorer, diver, angler, and artist. For details, visit www.vims.edu/events, or contact Lisa Phipps at 804-684-7099 or lcphip@vims.edu

Four More Marinas Receive Clean Designation

The Virginia Clean Marina Program, part of the Virginia Sea Grant Advisory Program at VIMS, announced in August that four more marinas have met the requirements to be certified as Virginia Clean Marinas.

The newly certified clean marinas are Ocean Marine in Portsmouth, the Tides Inn in Irvington, Dozier's Regatta Point in Deltaville, and Carter's Cove in Weems.

The Virginia Clean Marina Program asks marinas to voluntarily address a broad range of issues related to the environmental impacts of marina operations. Facilities are scored on the categories of design, management, emergency preparedness, petroleum control, sewage handling, trash and recycling, maintenance and repair, stormwater management, and boater education. In addition, certified marinas must meet all federal, state, and local regulatory requirements and actively promote and use best management practices.

Virginia Clean Marina is a cooperative effort of public and private interests who form the Marina Technical and Environmental Advisory Committee. The Committee consists of representatives from State departments of Environmental Quality, and Health, Conservation and Recreation; Virginia Marine Resources Commission; the marine trade industry; recreational boating, planning and design groups; and the environmental community.

The total number of marinas now certified is 38. The program has a goal of certifying 20 marinas per year, with an end result of 150 of the state's 350 marinas designated as clean within the next five years.

Continuation of the Clean Marina program was assured during the 2007 legislative session when state lawmakers voted to provide long-term funding. The program began with a 5-year federal grant.

For more information visit www.virginiacleanmarina.com