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Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2019 9:48 AM

To: Bizzell, Rob

Subject: [External] Southern Flounder

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Good morning Chairman,

I writing you in concern with Southern Flounder. Being involved with the flounder fishery for over 25 years both recreational and commercial, I will be the first to tell you that the size and numbers are not what they once were. That being said, the recreational community is not at fault for the flounder issues. Recreational anglers have taken all cuts on flounder with the most recent being a 30% cut when the creel limit was cut from 6 to 4. NCDMF staff have made recreational gigging and anglers out to be the boogeyman which is simply not the case. More undersized flounder and killed and thrown back dead in a week's time than what is harvested by the recreational community. Any type of closure or season for recreational anglers will kill local guide businesses tackle shops and the like. NCDMF did a recreational gig study in which they sat at boat ramps all night all summer and fall and recorded every fish on every recreational boat. That study will truly show how low rec. harvest is. I suggest the following changes to southern flounder.

No changes to recreational flounder fishing except a 15 fish boat limit hook and line and gig Pound net closure on existing sets until 2025. (This is a part time supplemental fishery to start with)

Permanent moratorium on new pound net sets

Complete Large Mesh gill net ban (mesh size has no effect on flounder size as it entangles, not gills flounder, it is also a part time fishery)

Pound net opening in 2025 a 100,000 pound quota is set, with quota adjusted accordingly moving forward to be reassessed every 5 years

Commercial gig fishery closure until 2021. Upon reopening a 20 fish creel limit is established with a season of May-September. Season to be changed moving forward as stock recovers

I believe pound net closures will help the stock recover quickly as the pounds catch a large amount of the fish as they migrate. Gill net ban will help not only flounder, but a multitude of species that are killed as discards.

Thank you

Allen Jernigan