



Blue Crab FMP

Draft Blue Crab FMP Amendment 3 Public and Advisory
Committee Review Results

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Marine Fisheries

NCMFC | Jason Rock and Corrin Flora | Nov. 15, 2019

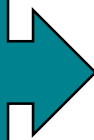


Timeline

TIMELINE FOR BLUE CRAB FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT 3 (May 1, 2018)

| MILESTONES | PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE |
|--|---|
| 1. Orient AC and Discuss Issues, Goal and Objectives | Sep. 2017-June 2018 |
| 2. Draft/Revise and Review Informational Sections and Issue Papers in the FMP and Establish NCDMF/AC Positions | June 2018 – June 2019 |
| 3. Present Timeline and Goal and Objectives to NCMFC; Solicit NCMFC Input on Issues | Aug. 2018 |
| 4. Obtain NCMFC Approval for Review of FMP | Aug. 2019 |
| 5. Public and Committee Review of FMP | Sep. 2019 |
| 6. Present Revised FMP to NCMFC for Selection of Preferred Management Options | Nov. 2019 |
| 7. Review of FMP by Department and Legislative Committee | Dec. 2019 – Jan. 2020 |
| 8. Procedural Approval of FMP and Approval of Notice of Text for Rulemaking by NCMFC | N/A |
| 9. Direct Rules through APA Process | N/A |
| 10. Final FMP and Rule Approval by NCMFC | Feb. 2020 |
| 11. Selected Management Measures Effective Date | No sooner than 48 hours if proclamation |

**You
are
here**

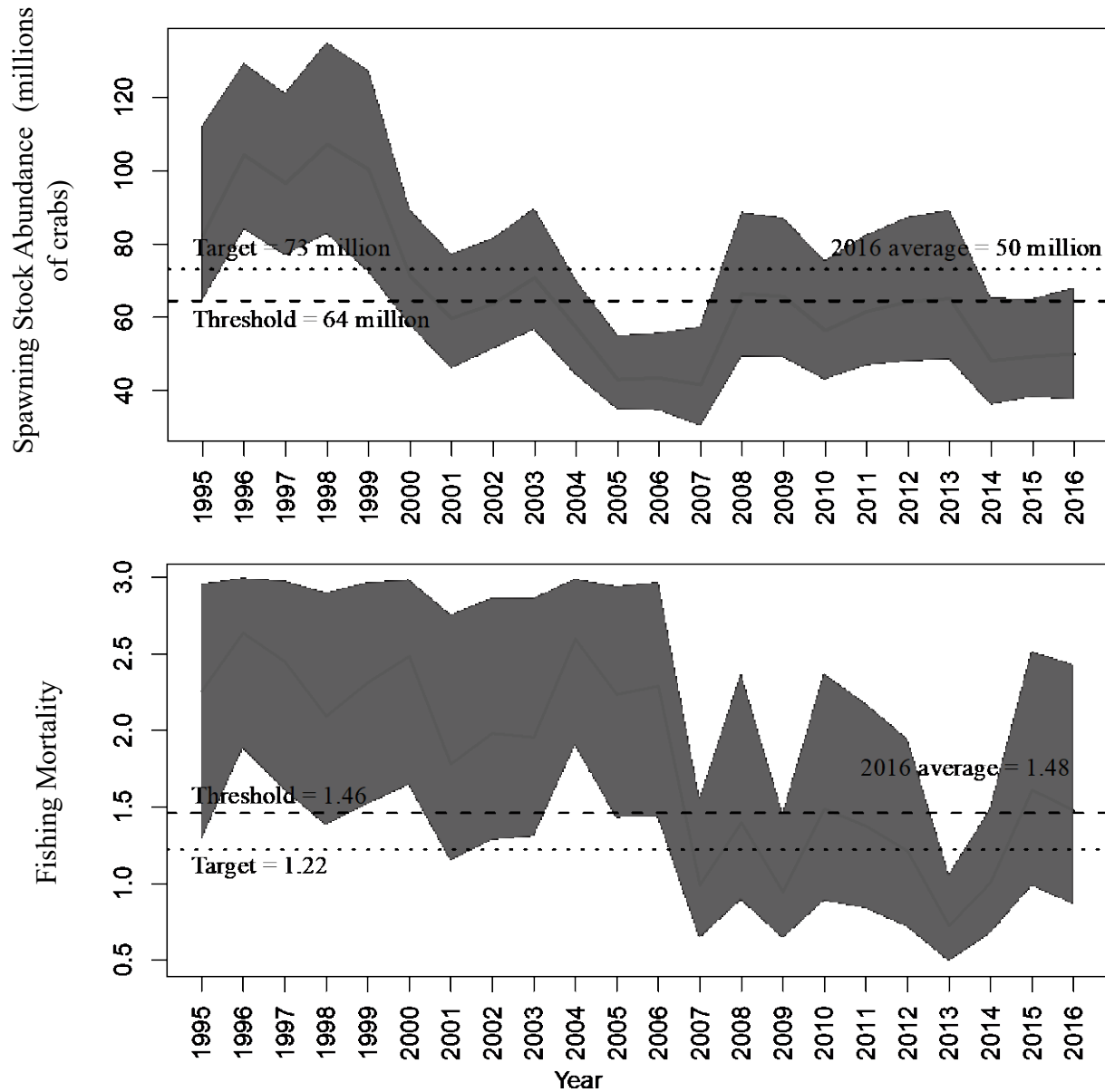


Issues

1. Achieving Sustainable Harvest
2. Non-quantifiable Management Measures
3. Water Quality
4. Crab Spawning Sanctuaries
5. Terrapin Excluder Devices
6. Bottom Disturbing Gear



Achieving Sustainable Harvest



Achieving Sustainable Harvest

Northern AC

- Support Blue Crab AC recommendation
- Support NCDMF recommendation for adaptive management framework
- **3.1% harvest reduction (50%-67% probability of success)**

Southern AC

- North of Hwy 58 Bridge: Dec.-Jan. closure
- South of Hwy 58 Bridge: Jan. closure
- 5-inch mature female minimum size limit
- **Maintain 5 percent cull tolerance**
- **Prohibit harvest of immature female hard crabs**
- Leave adaptive management decision to MFC
- **4.9% harvest reduction (67%-90% probability of success)**



Achieving Sustainable Harvest

Shellfish/Crustacean AC

- Table FMP process until the stock assessment is updated with data through 2019 to see the effects of the 2016 regulations
- Support consideration of habitat as part of the overall strategy for management of the blue crab fishery

Habitat and Water Quality AC

No position



Achieving Sustainable Harvest

Online Questionnaire

- Mature female size limit (67%)
- Limit harvest of immature females (67%)

Public Comment

March closure period would be devastating

- Prices are high
- When crabbers stock up Jimmie crabs for peeler bait



Achieving Sustainable Harvest

Blue Crab AC

- North of the Highway 58 Bridge: Jan. 1 through Jan. 31 closed season, a 6.75” mature female maximum size limit, and **prohibit immature female harvest**
- South of the Highway 58 Bridge: March 1 through March 15 closed season and **prohibit immature female harvest**
- **3.1% harvest reduction (50%-67% probability of success)**
- **Maintain 5% cull tolerance established in 2016 Revision**
- Adopt adaptive management framework including ability to relax regulations if assessment update shows the stock is not overfished and not overfishing
- Update stock assessment once 2019 data is available



Achieving Sustainable Harvest

NCDMF

- **Recommend maintaining 5% cull tolerance established in 2016 Revision**
- Recommend adopting updated adaptive management framework
- Recommend a minimum harvest reduction of 2.2% to meet the spawning stock biomass threshold within 10 years (50% probability of success)
- Encourage a reduction of at least 5.9% to meet fishing mortality target (90% probability of success) and to include:
 - 5-inch mature female minimum size limit
 - **Prohibit immature female hard crab harvest**
 - Continuous closure period with at least a 4.6% harvest reduction



Non-quantifiable Management Measures

This map was produced for illustrative purposes as a general guide to assist the public. Informational data used for this map were collected from federal, state, county, and private Organizations. While every effort is made to keep this map accurate and up-to-date, it is not intended to replace any official source. Under no circumstances shall the State of North Carolina be liable for any actions taken or omissions made from reliance on any information contained herein from whatever source nor shall the State be liable for any other consequences from any such reliance.

* Note:
RULE: 15A NCAC 03L .0202 CRAB TRAWLING
 (a) It is unlawful to take or possess aboard a vessel crabs taken by trawl in internal waters except in areas and during such times as the Fisheries Director may specify by proclamation.
 (b) It is unlawful to use a trawl to take crabs that does not meet mesh length requirements, except as provided in 15A NCAC 03J .0104. The minimum mesh length to take hard crabs with a trawl is three inches, except...
 (2) The Fisheries Director may, by proclamation, specify areas other than the area described in Subparagraph (b)(1) of this Rule for trawl mesh length use and increase the minimum trawl mesh length to no more than four inches to take hard crabs.

Photo by Jessica Lee

Non-quantifiable Management Measures

Northern AC

Support Blue Crab AC recommendation

Southern AC

- Support Blue Crab AC recommendation regarding number and placement of cull rings
- Support NCDMF recommendation to remove the cull ring exemptions for Newport River and eastern Pamlico Sound
- **Support maintaining the prohibition of dark sponge crab harvest during the month of April**



Non-quantifiable Management Measures

Shellfish/Crustacean AC

No position

Habitat and Water Quality

No position

Online Questionnaire

- Limit the harvest of sponge crabs (100%)
- Minimum size limit for soft and peeler crabs (61%)
- Pot limit (61%)



Non-quantifiable Management Measures

Blue Crab AC

Leave in existing rules implemented in 2016 and do not adopt anything else at this time. Except with 2 options on cull rings: 1) 2 cull rings in proper corner placement or **2) keeping the 3 cull rings with 1 in proper placement.**



Non-quantifiable Management Measures

NCDMF

- **Maintain minimum of 3 cull rings per pot**
- 2 cull rings placed within one full mesh of the corner and the apron on opposite outside panels in the upper chamber
- Remove cull ring exemptions for Newport River and eastern Pamlico Sound and prohibit designation of exempt areas in the future
- Prohibit harvest of sponge crabs year-round
- Establish a 3-inch minimum size limit for peeler and soft crabs at point of harvest



Water Quality



Water Quality

Northern AC

Support Blue Crab AC recommendation to support these strategies

Southern AC

Support NCDMF and Blue Crab AC recommendation to support these strategies

Shellfish/Crustacean AC

No position



Water Quality

Habitat and Water Quality AC

Recommend accepting the water quality recommendation from the Blue Crab AC and adding the Habitat and Water Quality AC to the reporting groups

Online Questionnaire

Support recommendations to address water quality concerns (89%)



Water Quality

Blue Crab AC

- Support all management options in this paper
- Support making the highest priority option four tasking the CHPP steering committee to what is suggested here and follow up with each of the other recommendations as that step is justified
- Have the habitat staff report back to the Shellfish/Crustacean AC with progress



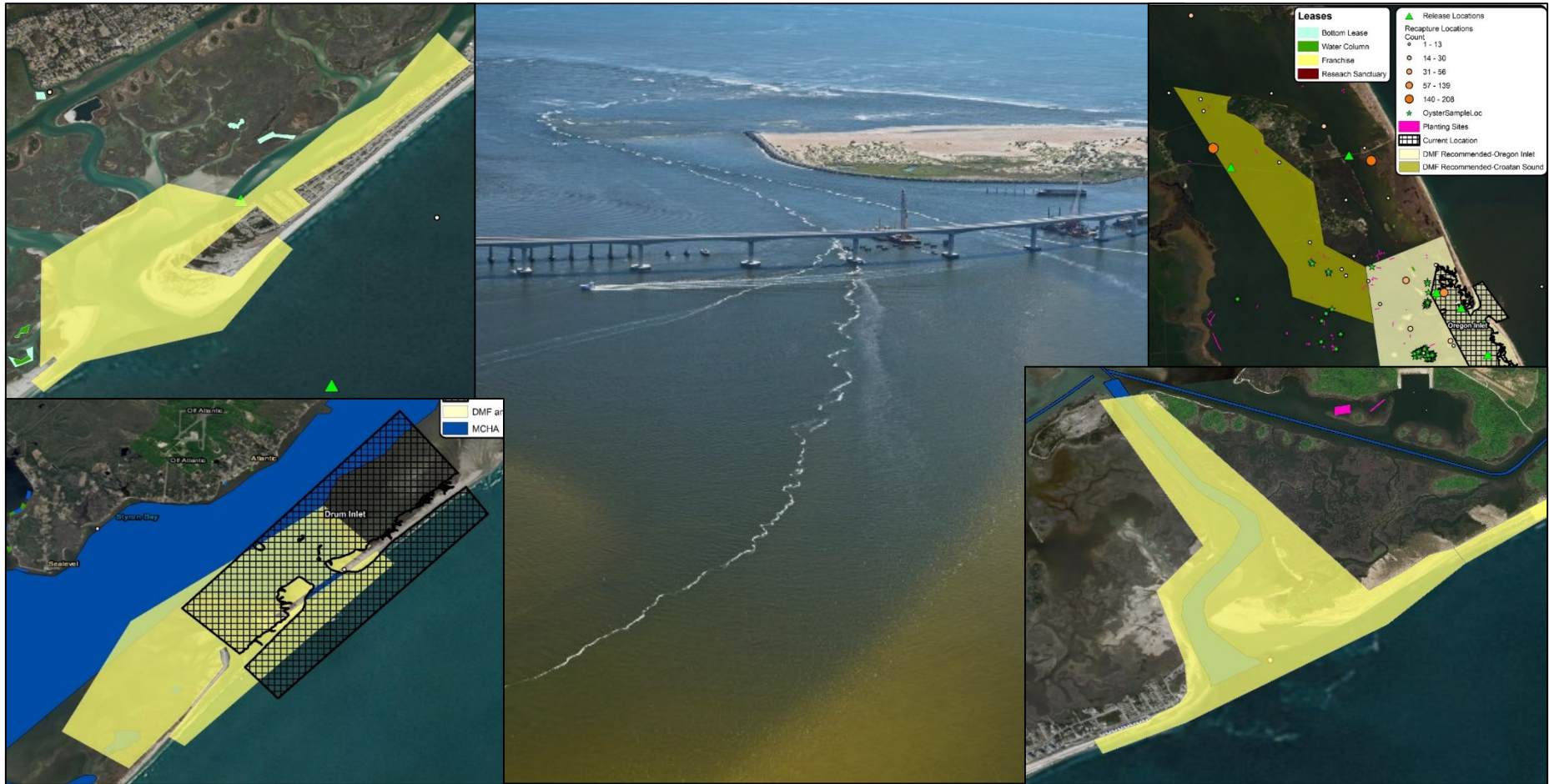
Water Quality

NCDMF

- Support all management options in this paper
- Recommend option four as the highest priority
- Have staff report back to the Habitat and Water Quality and Shellfish/Crustacean ACs with progress



Crab Spawning Sanctuaries



Crab Spawning Sanctuaries

Northern AC

- Split consensus on whether to expand or keep boundaries for existing spawning sanctuaries
- Support NCDMF and Blue Crab AC recommendation to move Drum Inlet spawning sanctuary
- Support Blue Crab AC recommendation for southern spawning sanctuary boundaries (excluding Cape Fear River)
- Support NCDMF recommended boundary for Cape Fear River spawning sanctuary
- March 1 – Oct. 31 closure for spawning sanctuaries south of Hwy 58 Bridge
- Do not support a spawning sanctuary (migration corridor in Croatan Sound)

Crab Spawning Sanctuaries

Southern AC

Support Blue Crab AC recommendation

Shellfish/Crustacean AC

No position



Crab Spawning Sanctuaries

Habitat and Water Quality AC

- Recommend keeping Oregon, Hatteras, and Ocracoke spawning sanctuary boundaries the same
- Support NCDMF and Blue Crab AC recommendation to move Drum Inlet spawning sanctuary
- Support Blue Crab AC recommendation for southern spawning sanctuary boundaries (excluding Cape Fear River)
- Support NCDMF recommended boundary for Cape Fear River spawning sanctuary
- March 1 – Oct. 31 closure for spawning sanctuaries south of Hwy 58 Bridge
- Do not support a spawning sanctuary (migration corridor in Croatan Sound)

Crab Spawning Sanctuaries

Online Questionnaire

- Establish new crab spawning sanctuaries at all inlets without a crab spawning sanctuary (61%)
- Establish a crab spawning sanctuary to serve as a migration corridor in Croatan Sound (56%)

Blue Crab AC Recommendation

- Keep Oregon, Hatteras, and Ocracoke the same and change Drum and Barden to proposed boundaries.
- Add spawning sanctuaries from Beaufort through Tubbs inlets using AC recommended boundaries with a closure period of March 1 – Oct. 31 with same restrictions as existing sanctuaries



Crab Spawning Sanctuaries

NCDMF

- Expand boundaries as presented for Oregon, Hatteras, Ocracoke, and Barden inlets
- Move boundary for Drum Inlet crab spawning sanctuary as presented
- Concur with Blue Crab AC recommendations Beaufort, Bogue, Bear, Browns, New River, Topsail, Rich, Mason, Masonboro, Carolina Beach, Shallotte, Lockwoods Folly, and Tubbs inlets
- Use NCDMF recommended boundary for Cape Fear River crab spawning sanctuary
- Establish a crab spawning sanctuary to serve as a migration corridor on the east side of Croatan Sound as presented in conjunction with expanding Oregon Inlet spawning sanctuary
- Close Croatan Sound spawning sanctuary from May 16 – July 15 with the same restrictions as existing sanctuaries

Terrapin Excluder Devices



Terrapin Excluder Devices

Northern AC

Support NCDMF recommendation to use these criteria

Southern AC

Support NCDMF recommendation to use these criteria

Shellfish/Crustacean AC

No position

Habitat and Water Quality

No position



Terrapin Excluder Devices

Online Questionnaire

Support criteria for designating Diamondback Terrapin Management Areas (59%)

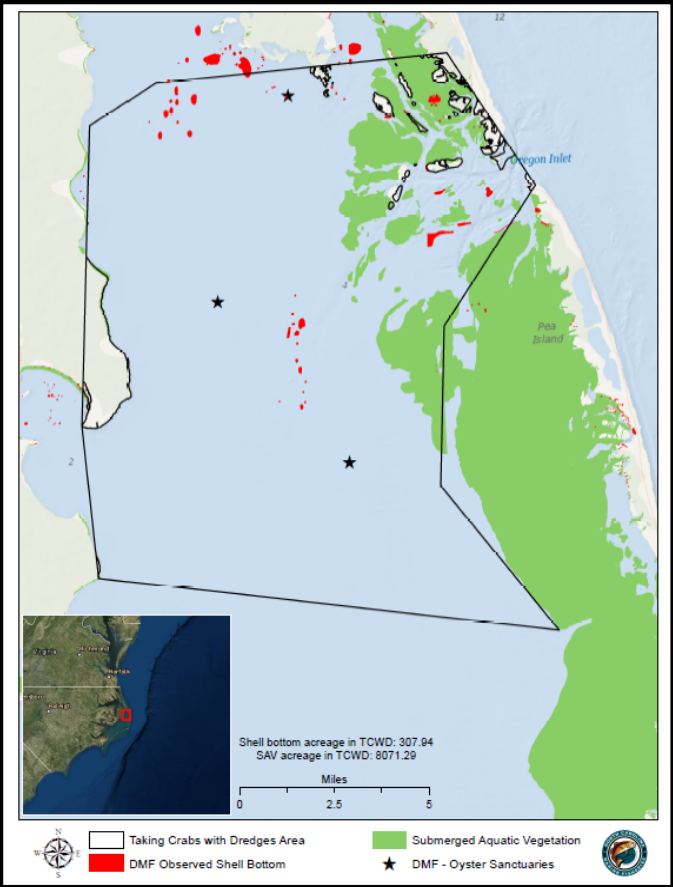
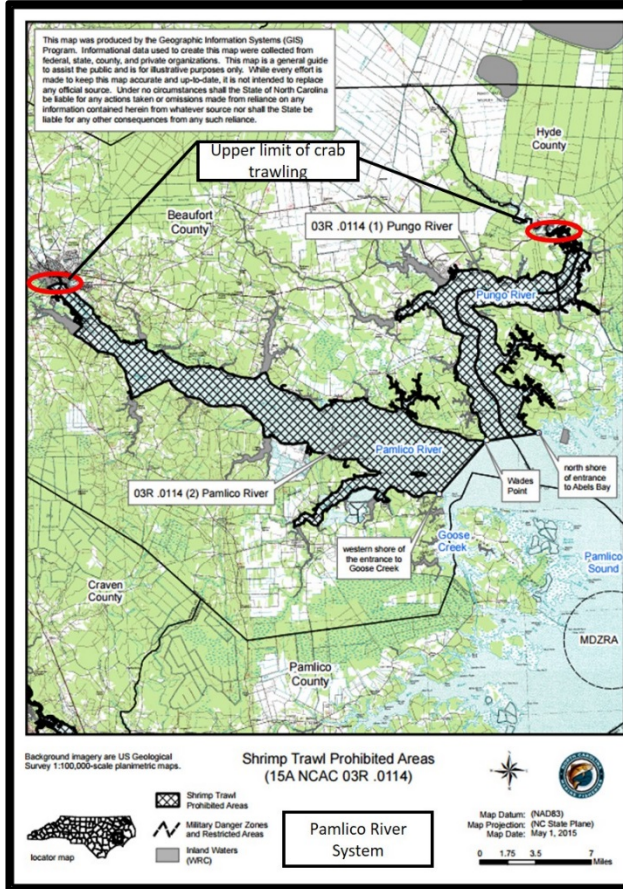
Blue Crab AC Recommendation

Use science on locally specific pot funnel design to reduce terrapins and identify individual creeks with terrapin population hot spots that would be closed to potting.

NCDMF

Use the criteria as outlined in this paper for the establishment of Diamondback Terrapin Management Areas (DTMAs)

Bottom Disturbing Gear



Bottom Disturbing Gear

Northern AC

- Support NCDMF recommendation to prohibit the taking of crabs with crab dredges
- Do not support reducing bycatch limit for oyster dredges until landings are examined
- No consensus on support of NCDMF recommendation to prohibit the use of crab trawls where shrimp trawls are already prohibited in the Pamlico, Pungo, and Neuse rivers

Southern AC

Support Blue Crab AC recommendation to not adopt any of the proposed measures



Bottom Disturbing Gear

Shellfish/Crustacean AC

No position

Habitat and Water Quality AC

- Recommend accepting NCDMF recommendation to prohibit taking of crabs with crab dredges
- Recommend accepting NCDMF recommendation to reduce the bycatch limit from oyster dredges to 10% of the total weight of the crab and oyster catch or 100 pounds, whichever is less
- Do not recommend accepting NCDMF recommendation to prohibit the use of crab trawls where shrimp trawls are already prohibited in the Pamlico, Pungo, and Neuse rivers

Bottom Disturbing Gear

Online Questionnaire

- Prohibit taking of crabs with crab dredges and oyster dredges (67%)
- Reduce the bycatch limit of crabs from oyster dredges to 10% of the total weight of the combined oyster and crab catch or 100 pounds, whichever is less (78%)
- Prohibit the use of crab trawls statewide (53%)

Blue Crab AC Recommendation

Not adopt any of the recommended management options on crab dredge and leave crab trawl lines as is

Bottom Disturbing Gear

NCDMF

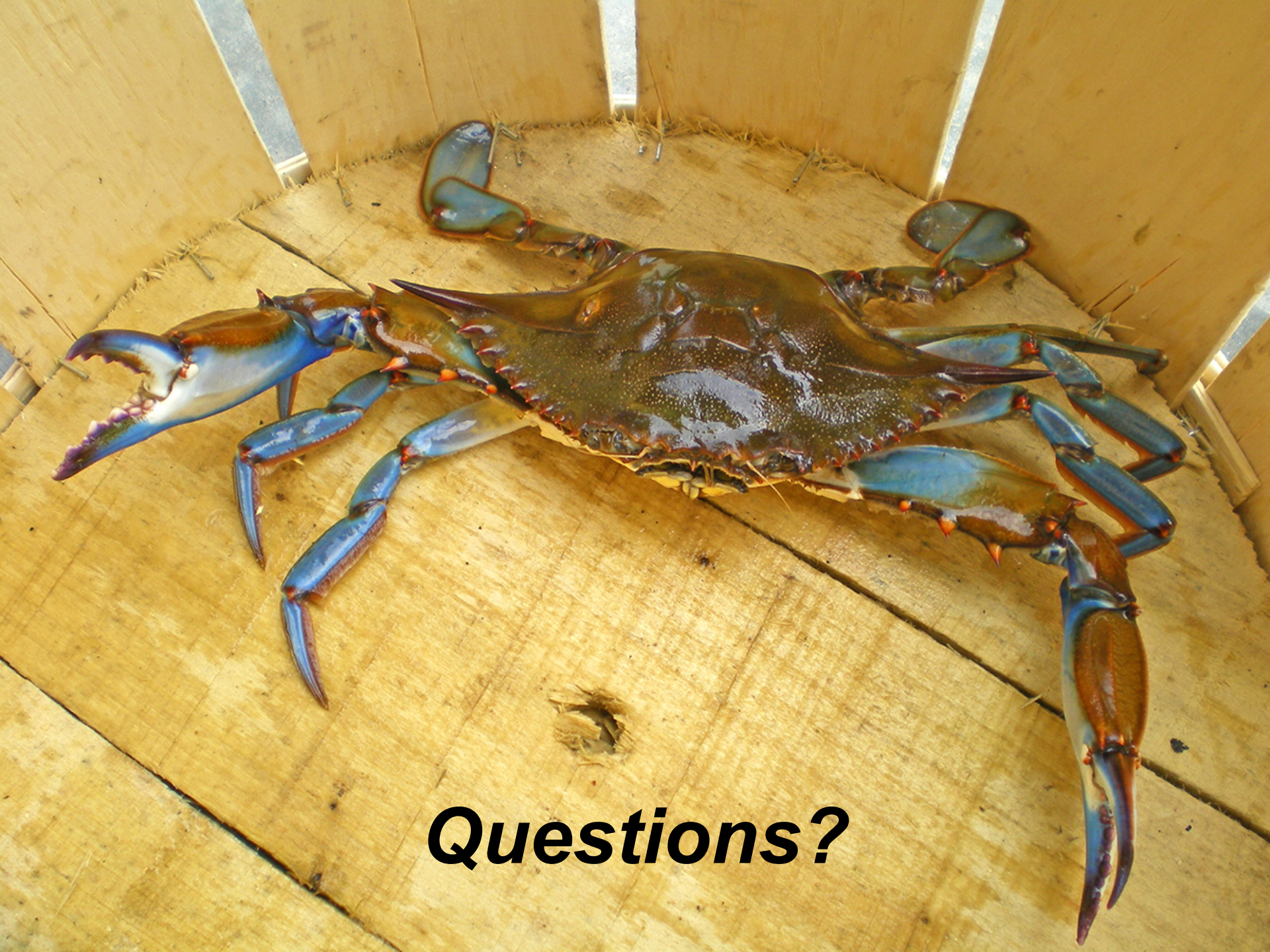
- Prohibit taking of crabs with crab dredges
- Reduce the bycatch limit from oyster dredges to 10% of the total weight of the combined oyster and crab catch or 100 pounds, whichever is less
- Prohibit the use of crab trawls where shrimp trawls are already prohibited in the Pamlico, Pungo, and Neuse rivers



Next Steps

- Nov. 2019
 - Select preferred management options
 - Send draft FMP for DEQ and legislative review
- Dec. 2019/Jan. 2020: DEQ and legislative review
- Feb. 2020: NCMFC vote on final approval of Amendment 3





Questions?