

Marine Fisheries Commission Public Comments – November 2019

Submitted Date and Time	Name and State	Comment
11/5/2019 4:30:00 PM	John Criner North Carolina	<p>I am an avid recreational surf fisherman who has resided in [REDACTED] for 7 years. I spend a fair amount of money on tackle, bait, licenses, beach-driving permits, etc. for the purpose of surf-fishing. The fishing around here has become ridiculously bad. Over the last 2 seasons (usually May - Nov for me) I have caught two fish I could legally keep, a 14 inch trout and a 15 1/2 inch flounder. So despite all of the time and money I am putting in, I still have to go to the fish market and spend \$15 - 20 per pound if I want to eat fish. As you can imagine this has become extremely frustrating. I am at the point of truly wondering if I want to continue this pursuit and spending the money that goes along with it. My question -- what is being or will be done to improve the fishing for the recreational surf fisherman?</p>
11/5/2019 17:30	Mark William Ragozzino North Carolina	<p>Seafoodwatch.org recommends not buying North Carolina blue crab due to decimation of the diamondback terrapin population by crab pot fishing. Whole Foods, Aramark and multiple other seafood purchasers follow Seafoodwatch.org recommendations. Competing states including Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and Alabama are not subject to this sanction due to their utilization of bycatch reduction devices (BRD's) and habitat preservation. The North Carolina Blue Crab Fisheries Management Plan Amendment 3 proposes designating Masonboro and Zeke's Island Estuaries of the North Carolina National Estuary Research Reserve (NCNERR) as Diamondback Terrapin Management Areas (DTMA) so that high quality research can be performed to insure future integrity of the crab and associated impacted populations. Such research may enable lifting of the Seafoodwatch,org sanctions thereby increasing the demand for and revenue from North Carolina crab.</p> <p>Masonboro Island and Zeke's Island comprise less than 0.3 percent of the North Carolina estuarine waters. The mission statement for the reserve is "..promoting informed management and stewardship of North Carolina's estuarine and coastal habitats through research, education and example". Such research would guide optimal management of the remaining 99.7% of the North Carolina estuarine waters. These research reserves, if freed from the impact of commercial and recreational fishing, would provide insight into methodologies to increase the productivity of North Carolina waters.</p>

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11/6/2019 7:24	Jan Best North Carolina	I remember when surf fishing was fun because you could catch fish. It seems as if we are killing off this past time. I support a 3 mile off shore restriction to give the juvenile fish caught up in nets a chance. Please don't pander to commercial fishermen to the detriment of all coastal fishing in our great state!
11/6/2019 10:28	Ted Williams Georgia	I am a life long recreational fishermen. I fish in N.C. once or twice a year now. As a child we had homes on [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Fishing during my childhood was great. I just returned from a week at Cape Hatteras and couldn't get a keeper it was dismal. On the day I left Sunday November 2. I wake up to no less than 10 commercial boats dragging nets in front of the house one no more than 500 yards off shore. No wonder you can't find a keeper. Suggest you revise your policy on commercial netting in shore and in estuary.
11/6/2019 11:05	James Hargrove DBA Middle Sound Mariculture North Carolina	<p>Firstly, thank you all for the time and dedication to the resources and people of the great state of NC. It is because of people like you that we are able to make changes to protect our natural heritage for future generations.</p> <p>It is vital to preserve the outstanding resource waters of the state; without out it, we lose the coastal heritage that draws so many people to the coast annually. With coastal development increasing annually, the water quality of historically important shellfish growing areas has declined. It is not hard to find multiple cases where water quality has deteriorated in NC due to coastal development and other practices.</p> <p>We are only as good as the quality of our water, without it, we have nothing. As an environmental steward, scientist, and oyster farmer, one practice that stands out as detrimental and archaic to NC's water quality initiative and shellfish mariculture industry is the practice of NCDMF's relay-depuration program. This program was developed to allow low-output, extensive shellfish gardeners to harvest wild shellfish from polluted tidal creeks that are closed due to bacteria (fecal coliforms and other pollutants), then transplant them to their bottom lease for later sale. It was created well before modern shellfish production methods as a means for commercial fisherman to access closed waters before the acknowledgement of the ecosystem services oysters provide. The problem with this method is, by removing the biological filtration and habitat from these creeks, pollutants and sediment from runoff are allowed to flood the greater estuaries and bays of our state. With modern technology in breeding, cultivation, and oyster seed availability, there is no need for the harvest of the biological filters that prevent estuaries from receiving high levels of polluted runoff.</p> <p>Continued to the next page...</p>

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11/6/2019 11:05	James Hargrove DBA Middle Sound Mariculture North Carolina	<p>Continued...</p> <p>It is absolutely counterproductive to keeping the waters of the state safe and clean. Along with the negatives associated with removing these water scrubbers (oysters), when the shellfish are relayed to the gardener's lease, the lease shuts down for a number of weeks to allow the oysters to release the bacteria/pollutants (depuration). These leases can be adjacent to other open leases and there is a possibility of contaminating those leases and creating a human health hazard. This could cripple NC's fledgling shellfish mariculture industry.</p> <p>Some possible solutions to solving this state supplemented program is shifting where these gardeners get their oysters from.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Discontinue this program! It is a huge burden to the state financially with state agencies overseeing and escorting commercial fisherman across the state and detrimental to water quality. 2) Discontinue this program in locations with high development. Morehead City to the SC line. 3) How about subsidizing these gardeners with oyster seed from the UNCW shellfish hatchery? This would spread better genetics across the state and reduce the negatives from harvesting from a polluted tidal creek. 4) Introduce a creek rotation. Similar to a crop rotation in terrestrial farming, waiting until a creek has had time to recover would better suit the environment that oysters create when they are left to provide habitat and filtration from land based non-point source pollution. Stopping pollution at its source is best but if we can leave a buffer to reduce sediment and pollution from entering the greater sounds we have a better chance of keeping our waters clean. 5) Mandate that any gardener that utilizes this program take shell back to the locations where they removed the substrate and oysters. This would at least allow recolonization for future oysters and their benefits. <p>Thank you for your time and consideration,</p> <p>James Hargrove President- Middle Sound Mariculture</p>

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11/6/2019 13:09	James Hargrove North Carolina	<p>Issue: Daylight restrictions for harvesting oysters on leased bottom.</p> <p>Does it make sense that an shellfish cultivator who purchased shellfish, pays the state rent for leased acreage, and cultivated them to a marketable size is restricted by daylight harvest limitations? I think the logic for this regulation is to prevent theft. This is admirable but if someone wants to steal oysters from me do you think they would follow the law to begin with?</p> <p>The aquaculture operation permit should preclude this regulation and any lease holder should not be restricted to daylight harvest/landing restrictions. If it is necessary, the harvester could notify Marine Patrol before the anticipated night/evening harvest.</p> <p>Please reconsider this regulation to be adapted to modern aquaculture practices.</p> <p>Thanks, James</p>