



ROY COOPER
Governor

MARY PENNY KELLEY
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

M-22-2024

PROCLAMATION

RE: GILL NETS – ALBEMARLE SOUND AREA INTERNAL COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS – IN MANAGEMENT UNIT A, REMOVES ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE USE OF SMALL MESH ANCHORED GILL NETS, AND MAINTAINS SOME OPEN AREAS TO THE USE OF ITP EXEMPTED RUNAROUND, STRIKE, DROP, AND DRIFT GILL NETS.

This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-19-2024 dated October 7, 2024. In Management Unit A, this proclamation removes attendance requirements for the use of anchored small mesh gill nets. It maintains the exempted areas open to the use of large mesh run-around, strike, drop, and drift gill nets to harvest blue catfish. It also maintains an expanded closed area in the Western portion of MUA to the use of all gill nets to reduce the likelihood of sturgeon interactions.

Kathy B. Rawls, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective at **12:01 A.M., Sunday, December 1, 2024**, the following provisions shall apply to the use of gill nets in the following areas:

- I. **MANAGEMENT UNIT A: AREA DESCRIPTIONS AND RESTRICTIONS (See Map)**
 - A. **Management Unit A:** encompasses all Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters bound on the south by 35° 46.3000' N latitude, north to the North Carolina/Virginia state line. This includes Albemarle, Currituck, Croatan and Roanoke sounds and their tributaries.
 - B. **Management Unit A, Subunit A1:** The following Coastal and Joint Fishing waters of the Currituck Sound, Albemarle Sound and Joint Fishing Waters of the Chowan, Perquimans, Little, Pasquotank, North, and Alligator rivers are open to the use of gill nets as described in Section II. B.
 1. **Currituck Sound:** Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Currituck Sound bound on the south by 36° 27.0000' N latitude, north to the North Carolina/Virginia state line.
 2. **Albemarle Sound:** Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Albemarle Sound west of a line beginning at a point on the north shore of the Albemarle Sound 36° 8.270 N - 75° 52.000 W, running due south to a point on the south side of Albemarle Sound at Durant's Island 35° 58.470' N - 75° 52.000' W, west to a line beginning at a point on the west shore of the Chowan River 36° 02.3162' N - 76° 42.4896' W; running northeasterly to a point 36° 01.5570' N - 76° 27.5950' at Bluff Point running southeasterly to a point 35° 58.7230' N - 76° 23.5880' W at Laurel Point.
 3. **Chowan River:** Joint Fishing Waters north of a line beginning at a point on the west shore of the Chowan River at Willow Branch 36° 04.7206' N - 76° 43.7667' W; running northeasterly to a point on the east shore at the mouth of Rocky Hock Creek 36° 06.6406' N - 76° 41.4512' W.
 4. **Perquimans River:** Joint Fishing Waters northwest of a line beginning at a point

on the north shore at 36° 05.9669' N - 76° 18.1791' W; running northeasterly to a point on the east shore 36° 06.7655' N - 76° 16.5953' W.

5. **Little River:** Joint Fishing Waters northwest of a line beginning at a point on the west shore 36° 07.5322' N - 76° 10.6901' W; running southwesterly to a point on the south shore 36° 06.4199' N - 76° 11.6047' W.
 6. **Pasquotank River:** Joint Fishing Waters northwest of a line beginning at a point on the north shore 36° 11.4282' N - 76° 01.2876' W; running southwesterly to a point on the south shore 36° 08.7563' N - 76° 03.6991' W.
 7. **North River:** Joint Fishing Waters north of a line beginning at a point on the west shore 36° 09.8986' N - 75° 54.6771' W; running easterly to a point on the east shore 36° 10.0108' N - 75° 52.0431' W.
 8. **Alligator River:** Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Alligator River south of a line running 35° 57.623 N and north of a line running 35° 40.350 N.
- C. **Lower Chowan River and western Albemarle Sound:** It shall be unlawful to use ANY gill nets (including those described in Section IV.) in the area south and east of a line beginning at a point on the west shore of the Chowan River at Willow Branch 36° 04.7206' N - 76° 43.7667' W; running northeasterly to a point on the east shore at the mouth of Rocky Hock Creek 36° 06.6406' N - 76° 41.4512' W, extending south and east to a line beginning at a point 36° 01.5570' N - 76° 27.5950' at Bluff Point running southeasterly to a point 35° 58.7230' N - 76° 23.5880' W at Laurel Point, including all other Joint Fishing Water tributaries of the Roanoke River Management Area as defined in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15 NCAC 03R .0201(b).
- D. It shall be unlawful to use drift gill nets in the Joint Fishing Waters portion of the Roanoke, Middle, Eastmost, Cashie, Chowan and Meherrin rivers and all other Joint Fishing Water tributaries of the Albemarle Sound Management Area as defined in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03R. 0201.

II. GILL NET CONSTRUCTION AND USE REQUIREMENTS (see Section IV. for exempted gear and areas).

A fishing operation regardless of the number of vessels or persons involved, shall adhere to the gill net restrictions specified:

- A. **Management Unit A as described in Section I. A (EXCLUDING the area described in I. B.).**
1. It shall be unlawful to use fixed or stationary gill nets with a stretched mesh length less than 3 inches and greater than 3 ¾ inches (gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 3 inches through 3 ¾ inches may be used).
 2. It shall be unlawful to use fixed or stationary gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 3 inches through 3 ¾ inches unless the nets are set to fish the bottom of the water column and not to exceed a vertical height of 48 inches off the bottom of the water column. Vertical height is defined as the distance between the top and bottom lines of the net.
 3. It shall be unlawful to use drift gill nets with a stretched mesh length less than 3 inches and greater than 4 inches.
 4. It shall be unlawful to use run-around, strike, and drop gill nets with a stretched mesh length less than 3 inches and greater than 4 inches (except in Sub-Unit A1 and as described in Section I. B.).
- B. **Management Unit A, Sub-Unit A1 as described in Section I. B.**
1. It shall be unlawful to use fixed or stationary gill nets with a stretched mesh length less than 3 inches and greater than 3 ¾ inches (gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 3 inches through 3 ¾ inches may be used).
 2. It shall be unlawful to use fixed or stationary gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 3 inches through 3 ¾ inches unless the nets are set to fish the bottom of the

water column and not to exceed a vertical height of 48 inches off the bottom of the water column. Vertical height is defined as the distance between the top and bottom lines of the net.

3. It shall be unlawful to use drift gill nets with a stretched mesh length less than 3 inches and greater than 4 inches.
4. It shall be unlawful to use run-around, strike, and drop gill nets with stretched mesh lengths other than 3 inches through 4 inches **or 5 ½ inches through 6 ½ inches.**

III. **GILL NET YARDAGE RESTRICTIONS**

A fishing operation, regardless of the number of vessels or persons involved, shall adhere to the gill net yardage restrictions specified:

- A. It shall be unlawful to use or possess (unless transiting to or from the Atlantic Ocean) more than 800 yards of gill net in any combination per SCFL/RSCFL holder or per vessel regardless of the number of license holders on the vessel whichever is more restrictive.

IV. **GEAR EXEMPTION DEFINITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS FOR RUN-AROUND, STRIKE, DROP, AND DRIFT GILL NETS:**

A. Exempted gear definitions:

1. Runaround, strike, or drop gill nets - gill nets that are actively fished by either (1) using the boat to run a net around a school of fish, creating a closed circle, or (2) using the boat after the net is set to herd fish into the net without delay, whereby soak time does not exceed 30 minutes from the end of the set to the beginning of the haul.
2. Drift gill nets - gill nets that are used to capture fish while being moved along by water currents whereby the net stays attached to the vessel from deployment through retrieval.

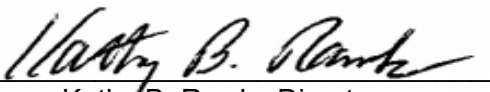
V. **SEA TURTLE AND ATLANTIC STURGEON INTERACTION REPORTING**

It shall be unlawful to fail to report any sea turtle or sturgeon captured in gill nets permitted by the ITP. Reports shall be made within 24 hours of the capture to the Division of Marine Fisheries at 252-515-5500 or 800-682-2632. **Self-reported takes of sea turtles and sturgeon by fishermen fishing without an observer do not count toward the allowable takes in the Incidental Take Permits.**

VI. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- A. This proclamation is issued under the authority of N.C.G.S. 113-134; 113-170.4; 113-170.5; 113-182; 113-182.1; 113-221.1; 143B-289.52 and N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 15A NCAC 03H .0103 and 03J .0103.
- B. It is unlawful to violate the provisions of any proclamation issued by the Fisheries Director under their delegated authority pursuant to N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03H.0103.
- C. The restrictions in this proclamation as described for Recreational Commercial Gear License holders are in addition to the maximum allowed yardage for Recreational Commercial Gear License holders described in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0302.
- D. **All other existing gill net rules and proclamations remain in effect.** See <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/rules-proclamations-and-size-and-bag-limits/fisheries-management-proclamations#currentprocs> to refer to those M-type proclamations for gill net regulations that may be effective in the areas covered by this proclamation.

- E. Proclamation [M-1-2024](#) dated December 15, 2023 prohibits the setting of gill nets in the Joint Fishing Waters of the state from midnight on Friday to midnight on Sunday each week. Portions of Albemarle and Currituck sounds are exempt from that provision.
- F. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0113 specifies that it shall be unlawful for any licensee under Chapter 113, Subchapter IV of the General Statutes to refuse to allow the Fisheries Director or their agents to obtain biological data, harvest information, or other statistical data necessary or useful to the conservation and management of marine and estuarine resources from fish in the licensee's possession. The Division of Marine Fisheries has implemented an Estuarine Gill Net Permit and an observer program as an inspection procedure to obtain such data.
- G. The Division of Marine Fisheries has received Federal Incidental Take Permits (ITP) for threatened or endangered sea turtles, and endangered sturgeon. These ITPs allow the legal continuation of the inshore gill net fisheries in North Carolina, subject to permit conditions. The ITP conditions are designed to monitor, avoid, minimize, and mitigate interactions with these species. Permit conditions require the division to provide 7–10 percent observer coverage in the large mesh anchored gill net fishery and 1–2 percent observer coverage in the small mesh anchored gill net fishery in internal coastal waters. **If the required coverage is not maintained, large and small mesh anchored gill nets could be prohibited in all Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters.**
- H. The intent of this proclamation is to implement gill net restrictions in accordance with the Division's FMPs for estuarine striped bass, river herring and southern flounder, and the Division's ITP for threatened and/or endangered species.
- I. Proclamation FF-26-2024 dated June 20, 2024, states that from January 1 through September 30, it shall be unlawful for a commercial fishing operation to take or land mullet for commercial purposes from 11:59 P.M. Friday to 12:01 A.M. Monday each week, and from October 1 through December 31, it shall be unlawful for a commercial fishing operation to take or land mullet for commercial purposes from 11:59 P.M. Friday to 12:01 A.M. Tuesday each week.
- J. Proclamation M-24-2014 dated July 31, 2014 requires holders of a Standard Commercial Fishing License (SCFL), Retired Standard Commercial Fishing License (RSCFL), or Recreational Commercial Gear License (RCGL) who deploy gill nets in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters with an exception for run around, strike, drop or drift gill nets, to possess a valid Estuarine Gill Net Permit issued by the Division of Marine Fisheries.
- K. In accordance with N.C. General Statute 113-221(f) and 113-221.1(c) All persons who may be affected by proclamations issued by the Fisheries Director are under a duty to keep themselves informed of current proclamations.
- L. Contact N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557; 252-515-5500 or 800-682-2632 for more information or visit the division website at www.ncmarinefisheries.net.
- M. **This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-19-2024 dated October 7, 2024. In Management Unit A, this proclamation removes attendance requirements for the use of anchored small mesh gill nets. It maintains the exempted areas open to the use of large mesh run-around, strike, drop, and drift gill nets to harvest blue catfish. It also maintains an expanded closed area in the Western portion of MUA to the use of all gill nets to reduce the likelihood of sturgeon interactions.**

By: 
Kathy B. Rawls, Director
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

November 26, 2024
3:45 P.M.