



ROY COOPER
Governor

ELIZABETH S. BISER
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

M-2-2024

PROCLAMATION

RE: GILL NETS – ALBEMARLE SOUND AREA – INTERNAL COASTAL AND JOINT WATERS IN MANAGEMENT UNIT A – RESTRICTING THE USE OF FIXED OR STATIONARY GILL NETS TO A STRETCHED MESH OF 3¼ INCHES

This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-25-2023 dated November 30, 2023. In Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters in Management Unit A, it is unlawful to use fixed or stationary gill nets with a stretched mesh length other than 3¼ inches. It maintains tie-down requirements for fixed or stationary gill nets and the exempted portion of Management Unit A that allows the use of run-around, strike, and drop gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 5½ inches through 6½ inches to harvest blue catfish.

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

I. MANAGEMENT UNIT A: AREA DESCRIPTIONS AND SPECIFIC AREA 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 to the North Carolina/Virginia state line. This includes Albemarle, Currituck, Croatan and Roanoke sounds and their tributaries.
- B. **Management Unit A, Sub-Unit A1:** The following Internal Coastal Fishing Waters of the 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. **Albemarle Sound:** Internal Coastal Fishing Waters of the Albemarle Sound west of a line beginning at a point on the north shore of the Albemarle Sound 36° 08.270' 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 on the west shore of the Chowan River 36° 02.3162' N - 76° 42.4896' W; running northeasterly to a point on the east shore 36° 03.1013' N - 76° 40.8732' W.
 2. **Chowan River:** Joint Fishing Waters north of a line beginning at a point on the on the west shore of the Chowan River 36° 02.3162' N - 76° 42.4896' W; running northeasterly to a point on the east shore 36° 03.1013' N - 76° 40.8732' W.
 3. **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.
 4. **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.
 5. **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.

6. **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.
 7. **Alligator River:** Internal 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. **Black Walnut Point to Mackey's Creek:** It is unlawful to use ANY gill nets in the area southwest of a line from Black Walnut Point 35° 59.3833' N - 76° 41.0060' W; running southeasterly to a point 35° 56.3333' N - 76° 36.0333' W at the mouth of Mackey's Creek, 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 is 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 water tributaries of the Albemarle Sound Management Area as defined in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15 NCAC 03R. 0201.

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

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.**

1. It is unlawful to use fixed or stationary gill nets with a stretched mesh length other than 3 ¼ inches.
2. It is unlawful to use fixed or stationary gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 3 ¼ 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 is unlawful to fail to equip fixed or stationary gill nets with tie downs spaced no farther apart than 10 yards to restrict the vertical distance between the top and bottom lines to 48 inches or less. If the vertical height of the net (distance between the top and bottom line) is 48 inches or less, no tie-downs are required. Fixed or stationary gill nets must be set so as to fish on the bottom and not exceed a vertical height of 48 inches.
4. It is unlawful to use **drift gill nets** with a stretched mesh length less than 3 ¼ inches and greater than 4 inches.
5. It is unlawful to use **run-around, strike, or drop gill nets** with a stretched mesh length less than 3 ¼ inches and greater than 4 inches **(except in Sub-Unit A1 and as described in Section II. B.).**

B. **Management Unit A, Sub-Unit A1 as described in Section I. B.**

1. It is unlawful to use fixed or stationary gill nets with a stretched mesh length other than 3 ¼ inches (gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 3 ¼ inches may be used).
2. It is unlawful to use fixed or stationary gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 3 ¼ 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 is unlawful to fail to equip fixed or stationary gill nets with tie downs spaced no farther apart than 10 yards to restrict the vertical distance between the top and bottom lines to 48 inches or less. If the vertical height of the net (distance between the top and bottom line) is 48 inches or less, no tie-downs are required. Fixed or stationary gill nets must be set so as to fish on the bottom and not exceed a vertical height of 48 inches.

4. It is unlawful to use **drift gill nets** with a stretched mesh length less than 3 ¼ inches and greater than 4 inches.
5. It is unlawful to use run-around, strike, or drop gill nets with stretched mesh lengths other than 3 ¼ inches through 4 inches **or 5 ½ inches through 6 ½ inches (run-around, strike, and drop gill nets with a stretched mesh length 3 ¼ inches through 4 inches and 5 ½ inches through 6 ½ inches MAY be used).**

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 is unlawful to use or possess more than 800 yards of gill net with a stretched mesh length of 3 ¼ inches through 4 inches in any combination per vessel or SCFL/RSCFL holder regardless of the number of license holders on the vessel, including nets as described in Section IV.
- B. **It is unlawful to use or possess more than 800 yards of gill net with a stretched mesh length of 5 ½ inches through 6 ½ inches in any combination per vessel or SCFL/RSCFL holder regardless of the number of license holders on the vessel including nets as described in Section IV.**

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 set and then are immediately retrieved.
 - 2) Drift gill nets - gill nets that are used to capture fish while being moved along by water currents and the net being actively fished and attended from deployment through retrieval.

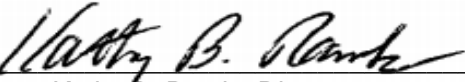
V. **SEA TURTLE AND ATLANTIC STURGEON INTERACTION REPORTING**

It is unlawful to fail to report any sea turtle or sturgeon captured in anchored gill nets. Reports shall be made within 24 hours of the capture to the Division of Marine Fisheries at 252-726-7021 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 apply to and 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 use of gill nets during the weekend in the Joint Fishing Waters of the state. The closure is effective from 12:01 A.M. on Saturday to 12:01 A.M. on Monday of each week. Portions of Albemarle and Currituck sounds are exempt from that provision in accordance with the N,C, Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan.
- F. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0113 specifies that it is

- 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 certain threatened or endangered sea turtles, and endangered Atlantic 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 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 Fishing Waters.**
- H. The intent of this proclamation is to implement gill net restrictions in accordance with Amendment 3 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan, Amendment 2 to the N.C. River Herring Fishery Management Plan, and Amendment 2 to the N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan, and to minimize interactions with threatened and/or endangered species. This allows for the blue catfish, white perch, and other small mesh fisheries in specified areas and times with minimal impacts to other species.
- I. Proclamation [M-15-2023](#) dated August 16, 2023 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 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.
- J. In accordance with N.C. General Statute 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.
- K. Contact N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557; 252-726-7021 or 800-682-2632 for more information or visit the division website at www.ncmarinefisheries.net.
- L. **This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-25-2023 dated November 30, 2023. In Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters in Management Unit A, it is unlawful to use fixed or stationary gill nets with a stretched mesh length other than 3 ¼ inches. It maintains tie-down requirements for fixed or stationary gill nets and the exempted portion of Management Unit A that allows the use of run-around, strike, and drop gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 5 ½ inches through 6 ½ inches to harvest blue catfish.**

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

December 18, 2023
2:00 P.M.