

Onslow County Public Hearing for Proposed Shellfish Leases Comments

August 29, 2024

Name	State/Province	Created	Submission ID	Comments
Debra Fox	North Carolina	7/23/2024 16:09	17347	<p>I do not have a problem with oyster farming but I do question how much of our shoreline will be taken up with oyster farms and not accessible water by boat. Mybother question I hope to see addressed based on the location of these leases are quality of water. PFAS are impacting many areas, especially New River. Is testing being done because it seems water oysters grown in contaminated water will also be above the safe limit.</p>
Robert Buracker	North Carolina	7/24/2024 6:26	17356	<p>I am a commercial shell fisherman that has been working these areas for 15 plus years that have been proposed to lease. It's already hard out here making a living on these waters with the leases that are already present . It will affect many people including myself and our income. It's not right for you to lease all these new leases. There have been many people for many years working these areas and it would not be right to take that away from the working men and women who have been working these waters for years.</p>
Kellie Willis	North Carolina	7/24/2024 6:30	17357	<p>I don't think it would be a good idea to lease out these proposed lease areas. There is many men and women who have worked these areas for many years myself included .If you were to lease these areas out it will affect many people's income and livelihood. There is already to many leases and too little space for commerical shell fisherman to work this would just add to the mess.</p>
Charles Walker	North Carolina	7/27/2024 13:49	17439	<p>I live at 115 Sea Gull Lane N Topsail Beach. I am a recreational boater and fisherman, and live on the marsh near New River Inlet. I am not necessarily in favor of these leases being approved in the Topsail Sound areas. I fully understand the efficiency of using the entire water column for shell fish farming. But, I don't agree with the fact that these areas will be taken away as navigable waters for any recreational use. Boaters, fishermen, kayakers, paddle boarders, and jet ski riders will be unable to use these waters, and will be consolidated into other areas to enjoy their time on the water. This will make the waterways more congested, and possibly increase the danger of accidents. The number of recreational Boaters is increasing all the time. I can't imagine what this increase is doing to benefit the local economy. My other issue is the affect these lines of baskets have on the views, across these pristine waters around us. You turn a peaceful quiet view, into an industrial site. Once again, with the population growth our community is experiencing, the pressure is really being put on our natural resources, to accommodate everyone's needs. By allowing these types of leases, you are constricting the public to lesser and lesser areas. If these leases were for bottom only farming, and the surface areas were still navigable, I would not be as objectionable. I'm a no. Thank you.</p>
Kyle Breuer	North Carolina	8/22/2024 15:27	18189	<p>The Town of Surf City would like to thank the Division of Marine Fisheries for holding public hearings on shellfish leases in and around the Town. Estuarine waters in and adjacent to the planning jurisdiction of Surf City provide important habitat for a diverse range of shellfish, birds, and other forms of marine wildlife. The Town supports actions that maintain or improve the quality of water and the abundance of the fisheries available to area residents and visitors, to include the propagation and availability of fin fish and shellfish.</p> <p>The siting of oyster column leases should address the need to ensure continued maritime navigation throughout public trust waters. A balance needs to be presented between shellfish production and the other commercial and recreational features that make Surf City a wonderful place.</p>
Thomas Cannon	North Carolina	8/28/2024 4:38	18291	<p>Hi my name is Tom Cannon, owner of Soundside Oyster Company. I am commenting here today to show my support for the leases that I have applied for. I would have like to have spoken, but the time for me to sign up has already passed. The selected areas I am applying for will be able to be clearly marked and easily fished by anyone and everyone and will be navigable with any vessel every day of the year. We need this area to continue to grow our farm. If anyone has any questions or concerns, you can contact me directly in addition to the DMF. Our contact information is on the internet. Thank you for your consideration. Thank you for the work that you do. All the best, Thomas Cannon</p>

Shane Bartus North Carolina 8/28/2024 16:19 18307

We live full time at North Topsail Beach, NC and own two other properties on Topsail Island and one in Sneads Ferry where we house family. We are concerned with the lack of oversight on the expansion of shellfish leases, in particular the water column shellfish leases. We have yet to see any environmental impact studies on water column leases and are concerned about the lack of oversight and requirements for the lease owners regarding carrying insurance for storms. These floating barges weigh several tons and if there is a storm surge, they will likely cause additional damage and be difficult to clean up. We regularly fish in the sound around Topsail and the bottom lease markers make it difficult to navigate already restricted waterways. The water column leases will absolutely close off navigable routes to the best fishing grounds; in particular the following locations are particularly egregious:

- 1) 36-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in Bogue Inlet.
- 2) 78-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in the mainland areas of Topsail Sound.
- 3) 71-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in Bogue Inlet.
- 4) 95-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in the Mainland Areas of Topsail Sound.
- 5) 85-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in the mainland areas of Topsail Sound.
- 6) 04-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in the New River below the N.C. Highway 172 bridge.

We regularly fish, kayak, and paddle board in these locations. The noise associated with harvesting and maintaining the water column leases already being fished has severely interrupted the fishing in the area, particularly Red Drum. Moreover, the birds roosting on the floating water columns defecate on the oysters thus contaminating them. There are already restrictions on the export of oysters due to presence of dangerous pathogens as noted in the recent NIH study: Comparative Study: A comparison between farmed oysters using floating cages and oysters grown on-bottom reveals more potentially human pathogenic Vibrio in the on-bottom oysters. 2020 Oct;22(10):4257-4263. doi: 0.1111/1462-2920.14948. Epub 2020 Mar 5. (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32079036/>).

I am concerned about the impact this will have on tourism in the area as fishing is a major draw to Topsail Island. I strongly feel that the water column leases will negatively impact property values as well.

Please carefully consider the impact the water column leases will have on those who live here.

Best regards,

Shane D. Bartus, Ph.D.
shane.bartus@gmail.com
205-492-7264

Buckley O'Brien North Carolina 8/28/2024 16:49 18313

I support establishing Tom Cannon's proposed lease (23-015BL/ 23-016WC).

Shane Bartus	North Carolina	8/28/2024 16:52	18315	<p>I am resubmitting this as I was informed that I need to call out the oyster leases by number. The number was not readily available and this is very frustrating. It leaves one with the feeling that the intent is to shove these oyster farms down our gullets. Here is my amended letter:</p> <p>We live full time at North Topsail Beach, NC and own two other properties on Topsail Island and one in Sneads Ferry where we house family. We are concerned with the lack of oversight on the expansion of shellfish leases, in particular the water column shellfish leases. We have yet to see any environmental impact studies on water column leases and are concerned about the lack of oversight and requirements for the lease owners regarding carrying insurance for storms. These floating barges weigh several tons and if there is a storm surge, they will likely cause additional damage and be difficult to clean up. We regularly fish in the sound around Topsail and the bottom lease markers make it difficult to navigate already restricted waterways. The water column leases will absolutely close off navigable routes to the best fishing grounds; in particular the following locations are particularly egregious:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 23-006BL/23-007WC 2) 23-015BL/23-016WC 3) 23-046BL/23-047WC 4) 23-050BL/23-051WC 5) 23-006BL/23-007WC 6) 23-015BL/23-016WC <p>We regularly fish, kayak, and paddle board in these locations. The noise associated with harvesting and maintaining the water column leases already being fished has severely interrupted the fishing in the area, particularly Red Drum. Moreover, the birds roosting on the floating water columns defecate on the oysters thus contaminating them. There are already restrictions on the export of oysters due to the presence of dangerous pathogens as noted in the recent NIH study: Comparative Study: A comparison between farmed oysters using floating cages and oysters grown on-bottom reveals more potentially human pathogenic Vibrio in the on-bottom oysters. 2020 Oct;22(10):4257-4263. doi: 0.1111/1462-2920.14948. Epub 2020 Mar 5. (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32079036/).</p> <p>I am concerned about the impact this will have on tourism in the area as fishing is a major draw to Topsail Island. I strongly feel that the water column leases will negatively impact property values as well.</p> <p>Please carefully consider the impact the water column leases will have on those who live here.</p> <p>Best regards,</p> <p>Shane D. Bartus, Ph.D. shane.bartus@gmail.com 205-492-7264</p>
Buckley O'Brien	North Carolina	8/28/2024 16:59	18318	<p>I support establishing Tom Cannon's leases. (23-024BL/23-025WC) & (23-015BL/23-016WC)</p>
TJ Chafatelli	North Carolina	8/28/2024 17:01	18319	<p>I strongly support the proposed lease for Thomas Cannon 23-024BL / 23-025WC and Thomas Cannon 23-015BL / 23-016WC.</p>
Brittani Reed	North Carolina	8/28/2024 18:32	18320	<p>I am in support of Tom Cannon's leases.</p>

Monica Mackey North Carolina 8/29/2024 6:49 18333

Regarding proposed shellfish leases:

23-015BL/23-016WC
23-046BL/23-047WC
23-050BL/23-051WC
23-006BL/23-007WC
23-015BL/23-016WC

Dear Neighbors:

I am opposed to the expansion of shellfish leases around Topsail Island, in particular the water column shellfish leases. The local economy will be hurt by limiting public access to these waters. Visitors and year-round residents choose to be in Onslow County because of these waters.

We built our home on Topsail Island and purchased additional property- because of these clear, unspoiled waters. We spend our money in the local economy, hire Onslow County employees, pay Onslow and NC State taxes - because of these unobstructed waters.

We fish, boat, surf, swim, and walk along these waters. The water is the number 1 reason we are here.

That's why we are opposed to these floating barges and expanded shellfish leases. The floating barges weigh several tons, block public access to the water, and can cause damage to private and public property in the event of a storm. They cause noise and air pollution from harvesting and maintaining the water column leases. They block fishing, boating, and sightlines.

I am concerned about the impact this will have on tourism in the area. Fishing and boating is the major draw to Topsail Island. I strongly feel that the water column leases will negatively impact property values as well.

Why give away the number 1 attraction of Topsail Island to private owners?
Please oppose the water column leases and save the economy of Topsail Island / Onslow County.
Thank you,
Mark Holmes and Monica Mackey
Topsail Island, North Carolina

Allen Jernigan North Carolina 8/29/2024 11:32 18340

I oppose 23-04BL. I oppose 23-047WC. This proposed leases sits directly in middle of entrance to bay. There is oyster rock and shoal on either side of entrance. Once this lease is approved we can't access this bay anymore especially on low tide. The bottom is also covered with SAV that you can literally see from space. Please use some updated maps instead of your outdated map with poor imaging from 1988 you are using.

I oppose both Thomas Cannon leases in Waters Bay. The ones you have mislabeled as "Topsail Sound." Topsail Sound ends at the Pender County line. I use the area where these leases are proposed for fishing, gigging and recreational clamming with clients. This bottom is also covered with grass that you can literally see from space but somehow NCDMF employees can't find it. This is also the 2nd hearing for these same proposed sites. Why is that? Why were several recent ones approved that you had a lot of comments against? Especially somewhere like the sandbar at 4 corners where the public swims and hangs out. None of us are against oyster farms I think it is a great thing. But unfortunately pender and onslow is at capacity. It's the smallest body of water in the state. We are being pushed out of our waters. Hopefully we will see yall in court soon.

Grey Chapman North Carolina 8/29/2024 11:46 18341

We reside full-time in North Topsail Beach, NC, and own two additional properties on Topsail Island and one in Sneads Ferry, where our family stays. We're worried about the lack of oversight regarding the expansion of shellfish leases, especially water column shellfish leases. We haven't seen any environmental impact studies on these water column leases and are concerned about the absence of oversight and requirements for leaseholders, including mandatory storm insurance. These floating barges can weigh several tons, posing a significant hazard during a storm surge, likely causing additional damage and complicating cleanup efforts.

We often fish in the sound around Topsail, but bottom lease markers already make it challenging to navigate the restricted waterways. Water column leases will undeniably block navigable routes to the prime fishing spots; some locations, in particular, are especially problematic:

- 2.36-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in Bogue Inlet.
- 3.78-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in the mainland areas of Topsail Sound.
- 0.71-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in Bogue Inlet.
- 3.95-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in the Mainland Areas of Topsail Sound.
- 3.85-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in the mainland areas of Topsail Sound.
- 3.04-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease in the New River below the N.C. Highway 172 bridge.

Lease numbers:

- 23-006BL/23-007WC
- 23-015BL/23-016WC
- 23-046BL/23-047WC
- 23-050BL/23-051WC
- 23-006BL/23-007WC
- 23-015BL/23-016WC

We frequently fish, kayak, and paddleboard in these areas. The noise from harvesting and maintaining the existing water column leases has greatly disrupted fishing activities, particularly affecting Red Drum populations. Additionally, birds roosting on the floating water columns defecate on the oysters, leading to contamination. There are already export restrictions on oysters due to the presence of dangerous pathogens, as indicated in a recent NIH study: "Comparative Study: A comparison between farmed oysters using floating cages and oysters grown on-bottom reveals more potentially human pathogenic Vibrio in the on-bottom oysters." (2020 Oct;22(10):4257-4263. doi: 10.1111/1462-2920.14948. Epub 2020 Mar 5. [Link to study](<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32079036/>)).