

Online Public Comments # 1-10
Final
August 2023 MFC Business Meeting

Name	State	Please type your comments in the box below.
Marc Boettger	North Carolina	<p>NC fisheries are currently being mismanaged. Gill netting and trawling need to be eliminated from or severely restricted in our inshore waters. The amount of by-catch produced from these gear types is unsustainable and has harmful and direct impacts on other important fisheries. It is clear that the current system in place is not working. Many of our important species are either over fished or experiencing over fishing. We should reduce wasteful fishing practices first. That means gill nets and trawling.</p>
CA Pittman	North Carolina	<p>Lifelong NC resident here, and full time coastal resident now.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. - I am APPALLED by the recent spate of commercials showing Director Rawls shilling for the wasteful trawl industry. How about you shill for the recreational sector. This is as SHAMEFUL as it gets in fisheries management. 2. - It is HIGH time for DMF to start managing our public trust fisheries for sustainability FIRST, INSTEAD of primarily the maximum commercial harvest. This has got to stop now. 3. - Re: stripe mullet closure - this is one of the worst closures we have ever seen, and negatively impacts every possible user group and associated industry and business - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - small tackle shops - what are they supposed to do with all of the mullet they haven't sold by November; wholesalers who supply them. Plus you are cutting into their already small profit margins. - recreational fishermen in every fishing scenario - surf, pier and docks, boats, everyone is negatively affected - and to say they cannot harvest and freeze mullet during open harvest season to use during the closure is just wrong. INSANITY. <p>How many Wildlife officers are going to be checking surf fishermen, or dock and pier fishermen? I'll bet very few; which leads to boating fishermen taking the brunt of enforcement efforts</p> 4. - commercial guys who now have one LESS option for revenue. You are going to force more of their efforts onto other already heavily pressured species. <p>Regarding fisheries management - stripe bass, weakfish (grey trout), flounder, and soon speckle or spotted sea trout - limiting harvest of these species is pushing catch efforts onto other species such as sheepshead as well as red and particularly black drum.</p> <p>If our fisheries managers do not start managing for sustainability of ALL species, we are facing even more closures of MORE species as we move forward. Our public trust marine finfishes cannot handle MFC and DMF</p>

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		<p>mismangement any longer. There HAS to be change NOW.</p> <p>MRIP data - as has recently been published and acknowledged, the DATA you claim to be using to manage our fish species is WAY off - WAY over-estimated recreational harvest numbers, yet DMF STILL insists on maintaining closures based on faulty data and suspect science. THIS HAS TO CHANCE NOW.</p> <p>https://saltwaterguidesassociation.com/noaa-update-with-major-fisheries-implications/?fbclid=IwAR2DTrLQ3pMnxK5D9XnqzG_kpih9s5AcDwkKcJwPGq3HtRR2xF2Bk8uCJDk</p> <p>IF you took the time to read this, I appreciate your time.</p> <p>CA</p>
Christopher Elkins PhD	North Carolina	<p>To: Rob Bizzell, Chairperson August 20, 2023 Marine Fisheries Commission From: Chris Elkins PhD Re: Toxins in NC and Imported seafood</p> <p>Background. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am Chris Elkins, presently of Gloucester NC. I am a retired medical scientist with 45 years' experience in medical and research labs. I started out as a Licensed Medical Technologist in CA, went on to get a MS in Medical Technology in VT, and received a PhD in Medical Microbiology at Hahnemann Medical School in PA. Yes, I was a lab rat, familiar with all aspects of medical laboratory work, including some toxicology. I am also a lifelong fisherman. With that background I of course am greatly concerned with the issue of toxins in seafood and the subsequent predicament facing the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality.</p> <p>The duties of NC DEQ (from its website): "The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is the lead stewardship agency for the protection of North Carolina's environmental resources. The organization, which has offices from the mountains to the coast, administers regulatory programs designed to protect air quality, water quality, and the public's health, ..."</p> <p>In the Marine Fisheries arena, one way DEQ protects its citizens public health is through its Shellfish Sanitation section in the Division of Marine Fisheries. Shellfish beds are monitored for fecal contamination to prevent</p>

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		<p>transmission of oral-fecal pathogens and if <i>Vibrio vulnificus</i> outbreaks occur, shellfish sanitation immediately responds. Those activities are outstanding; however, monitoring for toxins and chemicals in seafood is orders of magnitude more difficult and DEQ and the Division are unable to protect , ...water quality, and the public's health, ..." The state is just in the infancy of monitoring, and this is potentially a huge problem. We don't want another Flint, Michigan type event here in NC-we need to act now.</p> <p>Recently PFAS and other toxins have received much publicity and rightly so. The July 13th press release from DEQ r gave a pretty good overview of the very complex problem of PFAS and other chemicals contaminating our fresh water and saltwater fish. However, the State-recommended warnings on consumption are grossly inadequate and obtuse-most importantly consumers do not have the necessary information to follow them. IMO, the State should recommend no consumption of fish from contaminated waters until more info on each species is obtained. Short of a no consumption advisory in affected waters, if the State wants to protect its citizens, I recommend two actions to be implemented immediately:</p> <p>First, we need better outreach to susceptible populations: subsistence fishermen who presently consume many times the limit of toxic fish/seafood. Since the limits of consumption for children and pregnant women are essentially nil, we need to better inform this group as well. I expect the demographics of many subsistence fishermen means they do not have great access to the internet and doubt they received the July 13th press release. We have the names and addresses, and phone numbers of the subsistence fishermen through the DMF license division, so they need to be contacted and brought up to speed personally.</p> <p>The second action involves protection of seafood consumers of NC-harvested seafood. To follow NC DEQ consumption advisories, buyers of seafood (consumers) need to know from which water body fish are harvested. The State should implement a tagging system, such as we now have for striped bass, so consumers can make an informed decision. Colored tags, indicating water body of harvest, would be placed in the gill/mouth. This way consumers could follow the States recommendations. This would be a minor proposition as the machinery is already in place at the Division.</p> <p>We often hear from the commercial fishing sector that imported seafood contains toxins and needs more inspection and enforcement. Thus, the commercial sector should embrace the above proposed tagging system. We do not want outside agencies and organizations banning NC seafood (think Monterrey Bay Aquarium seafood watch, etc.).</p>

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		<p>Future research. The State needs to build and support a state-of-the-art toxicology lab that can screen for toxins in seafood, both imported and domestic. Clearly, the federal system is inadequate. The State should also use that lab to survey seafood to better understand which species are toxic.</p> <p>Thank you for your service.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted,</p> <p>Chris</p>
Sam Penegar	North Carolina	<p>Where have the fish gone? I have been a recreational fisherman in North Carolina since 1989. It was not uncommon to have two fish on bottom rig but now unusual to catch any legal size species. Please stop the use of gill nets. The day is coming when commercial and recreational fisherman will not be able to enjoy teaching the grandchildren to fish.</p>
THOMAS COLTRAIN	North Carolina	<p>You have and are really making a difference in fishing in NC but not in a good way. How in the world can you sit back and watch Guides DELIBERATELY target Striped Bass when the season is closed ? In summer when these fish are already stressed from high water temperatures they are killing these fish every day!!!</p> <p>Who and how are striped mullet being overfished? Simple answer and you know it. Commercial NETTERS!!! Get the Gill nets out of NC and along with the inshore otter trawls for shrimp for three years and see what the results are. The Commercial people know the answer and they will fight until the last fish is sold to keep these fish killing machines in NC because it is the last state to allow it. Please for one time do something to protect fish in NC.</p>
John Wroton	North Carolina	<p>I continue to be disappointed at the apparent lack of science being used to determine rules and regulations in our state. There is clear data showing that many of our fish species are over-fished and have declining populations, but we are still allowing commercial fishing operations to drag large nets, which decimate fish populations, result in deaths of other species from by-catch, and harm sea floor as they are drug along. Moreover, recreational fishers are unnecessarily penalized with short seasons and strict limits on size and number of fish that can be caught. The discrepancy between what recreational fishers and commercial fishers are subject to is shameful and not supported by science or the data. If we want to protect the long-term health of our coast and our fish and seafood stocks, we need to ban commercial net fishing, eliminate by-catch, and</p>

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		provide time and space for our fish stocks to recover each year. I hope and trust that the Commission will listen to the scientists and the researchers when making decisions and recommendations and not be swayed by the short-term interests of the commercial fishing operations who will just move on to the next area once they deplete and destroy our NC resources. Thank you.
Edmund Allen	North Carolina	Year after year commission meets to discuss and vote on issues to improve the fisheries in North carolina. Nothing is going to change until you recognize the the impact gill nets are causing to current and future fish stock. Its common sense that keeps getting pushed aside , while making other rule changes that has little or no impact. Trawling in the icw and near shore is also contributing to the loss of fish stock. You only need to be close to one as they cull the bi catch to see the impact. Start making rules that will really make a difference.
Elmo Langley	North Carolina	I do not believe that any NC fisherman believes that the flounder catch exceeded by over 500k. The people who run this commission have illusions and should be canned.
Chris McCaffity	North Carolina	Please support stocking native seafood that can naturally reproduce. The Striped Bass stocking program is a good model to follow for using proven management tools that enhance our fisheries, freedom, and food supply for all NC citizens. We have the ability to make our fisheries better than ever before if that is our goal. The course we are on will continue wasting our public resources while restricting our freedom to access them. Does anyone have a better idea than the wise use of hatcheries and habitat enhancements for sustainably supporting more recreational opportunities and seafood production? Recreational and commercial fishermen should be working together with fishery managers rather than fighting each other. Our license fees along with a realignment of management priorities could fund enhancement efforts.