

**N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission
February 2023 Business Meeting
Online Public Comment**

Name	State	Please type your comments in the box below.
Wesley Deal	North Carolina	<p>I noticed that this week one of the topics to be addressed is the overfishing of spotted sea trout. Maybe you could expound on what you perceive that to be. I see lots of people trout fishing, but then I have been used to seeing that all my life. I do see more on the upper neuse, etc and Pamlico that probably are targeting trout. I think that's a wonderful situation. Not a problem. Lots of people fishing doesn't equate to lots of catching, but it does equate to a lot of fun and many youth being taught good ethics and fisheries conservation. I bass fished competitively for many years and saw very crowded situations. Take yourself to Lake Gaston if you want to see crowded fishing or overfishing as you call it. Yes, the Pamlico and Neuse resemble sometimes.</p> <p>Major difference in trout, flounder, puppy drum, and many many other species is to bass fishing, is there is no gill netting or netting period. All the coastal species are being harmed mostly by one thing. Don't see why you can not understand that the netting you allow is doing great great harm. The data shows it, common sense should tell you that one net in one set can catch more fish or specks in one set than every fisherman in my neighborhood will rarely ever catch as a group in one whole day. The upper Neuse and Pamlico are thriving with fish. Why?? Because we have stopped the legal netting in those areas. However plenty of illegal night netting, netting with pleasure craft appearance boats is happening. I see and hear of it quite frequently. Can you imagine what we could have here if you just stopped gill netting period. Unbelievable what our fisheries could be. We are the only state that allows the raping of our sounds etc as you do.</p> <p>Do we know why you allow it? Sure we do, but I will refrain from the obvious.</p> <p>So what do you think will solve as you say over fishing of trout? Limiting recreational anglers to smaller quantities or limit their time on water?? You know how to solve it but I don't think anyone has the guts to do it.. I am sure you will be threatened by the commercial lobby and fishermen, they are good at that.</p> <p>I wish the days still existed where they could cast their nets and have great bounties. They have no one to blame but themselves. Just maybe if we took all the nets out of the water, it may be feasible one day to allow some stricter managed netting practices. Not the kind of threat management of today's crowd.</p> <p>You know they may have to go do some other work, sorry but that's reality. Many people have had to change jobs, careers etc because their work played out for whatever reason. Ask the mom and pop businesses across the USA that unfortunately couldn't make it and had to close. That's sad and painful to me, but it's reality. Reality is the nets are ruining a once very vibrant NC fishery.</p> <p>Please consider very carefully your decisions.</p>

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		<p>Get out and enjoy catching a nice mess of fish and maybe saving a few to eat before you make decision to further harm our resources.</p>
Stuart Creighton	North Carolina	<p>In a recent social media collaboration with NC Catch, it was stated that DMF staff collect more data in two weeks than other states do in two months.</p> <p>Yet, SOMEHOW, 30 years worth of that data was not robust enough to protect documented hotspots, meaning nursery areas in Pamlico Sound, for juvenile southern flounder, weakfish, spot, croaker, and more from bycatch in the shrimp trawl industry.</p> <p>The data was not used in a timely manner to prevent striped bass populations from crashing throughout the state.</p> <p>The data is somehow insufficient to allow species specific management of flounder so that NC's angling public can have access to healthy stocks of summer and gulf flounder.</p> <p>Hopefully, the correct data will be collected in the upcoming study of the upriver CSMA regions that shows the improvement in the striped bass, and other, fisheries.</p> <p>To this point, the data has not been used to hold non-compliant commercial fishermen accountable for refusing on board observation requests under the ITP guidelines. No estuarine permits have been revoked, no seasons have been shut down for consistent, industry-wide lack of cooperation with the specifications of the ITP.</p> <p>Since NC has such a plethora of collected data on its marine fisheries, it is past time to use it to make the difficult, impactful policy decisions that will restore the numerous species that are in decline.</p> <p>The scoping period will soon open for the latest update of the speckled trout FMP. It should be no surprise that the fishery is experiencing overfishing as it is currently carrying inshore fishing in this state. Even so, recreational dead discards are a concern, as is significantly increasing commercial effort. Overfishing can be ended in a timely manner if the following steps are taken.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1). Remove gill nets and replace them with a hook and line fishery. It is a high capacity fishery, with a 75 fish per day limit, so hook and line is a viable replacement. A careful limit will have to be placed on licenses to prevent people entering the fishery to avoid recreational limits. (2). Create a full slot of 14-22" across BOTH user groups. This will allow for the larger fish to remain in the water and improve recruitment capacity. The recreational creel limit should remain at 4 per person per day. (3). To minimize dead discards, require the use of circle hooks when fishing with natural bait and either single in line hooks or compressed barbs on trebles when using artificial baits. (4). Remove the "personal consumption" loophole from the commercial side. This encourages significant unreported effort.

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		<p>(5). Reform the requirements for holding a SCFL to reduce the fishing effort from the 60% of license holders that never report a single trip ticket.</p> <p>Incorporating these management measures will reduce both effort and discards and will end overfishing in the appropriate amount of time as required by statute.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration in these matters.</p>
Jerrett Oaks	North Carolina	<p>We need to stop the inter coastal gill netting and trawling to help protect our natural resources. For our sake and the generations to come. Also stop the incidental take permits. We need to join the rest of the country and stop these things in North Carolina also.</p>
Evan Jacobs	North Carolina	<p>"The charm of fishing is that it is the pursuit of what is elusive but attainable, a perpetual series of occasions for hope." As the NC And SC representative/coach for salt strong, I am ashamed to say that I am not proud of our fishery in North Carolina as we have arguably the worst fishery along the east coast in regards to conservation and respect for our fishery. The use of gill nets should NOT be allowed anymore and continued for commercial use for attaining our inshore species including red drum, speckled trout, flounder, black drum, sheepshead, and more. As inshore species are the least consumed out of all species, it is not realistic to continue to harvest hundreds and thousands of these fish with many of them I have personally seen go to waste and never consumed anyways. North Carolina needs to join the rest of the east coast and discontinue this harsh and cruel method of fishing and have more respect for our own fishery instead of continue to decrease our limit numbers more and more each year and season and decrease the potential for productive fishing and love for fishing for our new anglers. If we continue to ignore this crucial issue, we will eventually no longer have a fishery that is attainable. And we will no longer have a fishery and environment that gives us hope- and a passion that we love so much and want to share with others- including our new anglers and for our next generation of anglers. There will be nothing left one day at this rate and they will never understand or know the charm and passion of fishing.</p>
Harold Wilson	North Carolina	<p>Please try a new plan for our flounder. Current plan doesn't seem to be working. I see we don't get a spring season again this year. Could the answer lie in the commercial harvest ?</p>
Wilson McGraw	North Carolina	<p>Commissioners - Please put our Marine Resources first! All users groups need our fisheries here for generations to come. In making decisions on creel limits, seasons, methods of take, and other limitations, you must manage with a conservative approach that guarantees strong stocks in perpetuity. Stock Assessments show the continued fall of stocks across multiple species when compared to historic levels. Only a conservative approach to management that protects our estuarine waters and critical habitat will let those stocks grow and let NC return to being a premier fishery for all user groups.</p>

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Steve McCracken	North Carolina	Gill net fishing in Clubfoot Creek located in Craven county is contributing to the destruction of submerged aquatic vegetation. I have witnessed uprooted sea grass floating on top of the water after the gill netters have hauled in their catch. In addition, I have witnessed prop scarring where the boats are circling in shallow water to flush the fish into their nets. Sea grass meadows hold sediment in place and help protect shorelines from coastal storm damage. Sea grass meadows serve as an essential habitat for juvenile fish and invertebrate species. Blue crabs, shrimp and fin fish depend on the grass beds for growth and survival. Please eliminate gill net activity in this vital nursery so the important commercial and recreational stock have a chance to mature into legal take sizes.
Kenneth Broadwell	North Carolina	I am a retired commercial and recreational fisherman. The recent DMF decision not to open up a spring season for ocean flounder is a bad one. It goes against the Amendment 3 MFC recommendation which I believe was an olive branch to the recreational sector. Quite frankly the planned limit of one fish was ridiculous. Many thousands of pounds are allowed to be trawled and caught in the ocean. There should not even be a limit for recreational in the ocean. The concept of managing ocean flounder in the Southern Flounder FMP is wrong. In addition the DMF's logic of the recreational fisherman catching a southern flounder by mistake is a slap in the face of recreational fishermen and the MFC members. This sounds like one or two hard headed DMF managers that needs to give this up. I predict an ugly battle. Recreational fishermen have a legitimate beef. FYI. I would likely not fish in the ocean for flounder regardless of the creel limit. I can go to Virginia and catch them.
Bill Nunofyabusiness	North Carolina	You people are either idiots or crooks. You have the data on NC commercial fishermen.....how many commercial licenses are granted and how many actually ever submit a ticket? [REDACTED]. You let the commercial fishermen rape our waters, you know most of them sell them to their friends and it never enters our tax system. They cry oh no, you're killing our business, knowing full well most have full-time jobs and do this to cash in on the side because of you idiots. So someone can't take a vacation 1 week out of the year and keep a stupid flounder, and only 1 drum, oh no....Recreational fisher are going to destroy our industry!!!!. You stupid idiots.
Eric Bregman	North Carolina	Please do not approve the striped mullet amendment until an independent economic impact study has been done on this from the recreational sector perspective. This closure would have extreme consequences to bait and tackle Shops who sell bait to the thousands of people that flock to our coast in the fall, to our few piers that rely upon fisherman in the fall, plus all the hotels and restaurants. As is customary, the MFC is punishing recreational anglers who use a small Portion of this fishery for bait and is ignoring the quantitative and qualitative impacts on the recreational community.

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Steve Bernardo	North Carolina	<p data-bbox="428 147 682 191">Re: Striped Mullet</p> <p data-bbox="428 235 2011 402">I'm hearing that Striped Mullet will be closed for the month of November... I do understand that the females have been raped by the commercials. Striped Mullet are commonly used as the preferred cut bait by all recreational fishermen. I'm positive that accommodations can be made that will allow sport fishermen still have their preferred bait and save the females from harvest.</p> <p data-bbox="428 446 2011 570">Allow only cast netting, all females with roe have to be culled out. Size restrictions with a maximum length would be suggestions. Heavy fines for fish houses and Comms that buy and sell Roe Mullet during the spawning period.</p>
Will Sanderson		Please continue to keep gill nets east of the ferry lines.

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Capt. Jot Owens	North Carolina	<p>With the current flounder fishery management in North Carolina it is time to have a Recreational Ocean Ocellated Flounder season (summer & gulf). The Ocellated flounder stock numbers show they are in good health, yet the state will not have a recreational season; why?? I realize the main reason is the problem with identifying a non-ocellated; southern flounder, versus an ocellated gulf or summer.</p> <p>I truly believe if the North Carolina wildlife resource commission can educate the public to shoot the right species of ducks coming into their blinds at over 30 miles an hour and identify them. Then I believe we can educate Anglers to identify a flounder when it is right in front of them. Flounder fishing is all to important to the recreational and Charter anglers of this great state. It's time to educate, instead of limiting access to this public trust.</p> <p>Also I'd like to add, I believe going forward that the MFC needs to take a look at False Albacore management for the future. This state has recorded of mostly taking a reactive approach to fisheries management. It's time to start taking proactive management measures and the False Albacore needs to be reviewed.</p> <p>Thank all very much for your time on the council and your time in reading these comments.</p> <p>Capt. Jot Owens</p>
Ryan Speckman	North Carolina	<p>Commissioners,</p> <p>I'd like to state that I am opposed to any additional regulations on the striped mullet fishery until our biologists get a better idea on where the population numbers currently are. I've read Glenn Skinner's comments, and it appears our Commission is voting on a matter that very likely isn't an issue at all, or at least hasn't truly been proven yet.</p> <p>Striped mullet fishery is very important to not only the health of the marine ecosystem, and as bait for the recreational sector, but it's also being rejuvenated as an important food fishery. It's one of the few commercial fish that is essentially a vegetarian, low mercury, high omega 3, and affordable for the seafood consumer further</p>

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		<p>inland. Many people depend on this fish as part of their livelihood, from all sectors of user groups. It would seem foolish to make any drastic changes to this fishery if there are truly gaps or bad data driving a decision process.</p> <p>Please take into consideration that it doesn't appear there is a need to rush into a decision...and allow our state's biologist's to gather and analyze better data before drastic decisions are made.</p>
Walter McNamee III	North Carolina	<p>I am sickened that another fishery is being closed by those that are OWNED by the CCA (Can't Catch Anything). They are not looking at true data. They are manipulating the data to suite their means AGAIN.</p> <p>I seen this first hand in 2010 with the meetings over Speckled Trout. During that time, I was a deck hand and we were fishing for Speckled Trout. Almost every day, an observer (Emily) rode with us. When she was mentioned, we were told that it would be looked into. The next day, Emily told us that she could not go with us anymore. Her data was never looked at.</p> <p>This has never been about what is good for the sustainability of our NC waters and resources. This is about special interest groups that are taking these same resources for themselves. This is about trying to close the state to commercial fishing. I think it is beyond time for lawsuits to challenge these "regulations" that have come about under CCA rule.</p>
Chris McCaffity	North Carolina	<p>It is time we reconsider our fishery management priorities. For decades the primary focus has been on stricter regulations that restrict our freedom to fish and access public resources with dismal results. The reality is more people want to fish recreationally and eat local wild-caught seafood. The good news is we can help most stocks overcome habitat-related spawning obstacles. Hatcheries and habitat enhancements can be the perfect blend of public water aquaculture and natural seafood that lives wild and free until harvested by independent fishermen. Our license fees along with a realignment of management priorities can fund regional stocking efforts for a wide variety of native seafood. We could have a year-round flounder fishery. We could once again see herring harvested in the spring and enjoy epic fall spot runs as these popular fish and many others thrive at historically high levels even as we harvest more. Most size limits could be removed, and reasonable retention limits could make it fun to fish without fear of breaking the law. Recreational and commercial fishermen could work together with fishery managers and marine patrol as liaisons rather than continuing the adversarial relationship we currently suffer. Most of us have a common goal of healthy fisheries that are responsibly harvested with minimal waste. The course we are on is leading to stricter regulations while opening the door to industrial fish farming operations that will further restrict our freedom to access public waters and resources. Wise use of proven management tools that focus on enhancement can support world-class sportfishing and wild-caught seafood that is sustainably harvested by independent fishermen. We could set an example for promoting freedom and</p>

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		food security citizens around the globe would want to follow. Does anyone have a better solution for sustainably supporting more recreational fishing and wild seafood production?