

May 2015 NC Marine Fisheries Commission Meeting Public Comments

Lord willing we will be fishing during this meeting, so I am submitting my written comments before the deadline. Please keep an open heart and mind as you consider these solutions for enhancing our fisheries, freedom, and food supply.

Uncertainty about Southern Flounder populations seems to be the latest management crisis that threatens our freedom to fish and eat them. It looks as if forcing fishermen to only target the female breeding stock is one of the preferred management options. Does it really make sense to discard almost every male flounder when one male can fertilize the eggs of multiple females?

Rather than continuing down the failed path of restricting access and creating more regulatory discards, why don't we focus on enhancing our flounder fishery? We should follow existing models of successful stocking programs and establish Hatchery Supported Quotas. Stocking efforts could be funded with our license fees along with existing taxes that are already earmarked for promoting recreational fishing and domestic seafood production. Stocked fish should be marked for easy identification and should not have a size limit to preserve genetic diversity. This would promote tourism by increasing angling and culinary opportunities.

Licensed fishermen should be allowed to decide how our license fees will be used and quotas will be managed within certain guidelines. Separate recreational and commercial online forums should be set up to facilitate discussions and hold votes. Our votes should be binding when a 2/3 majority of those interested enough in an issue to participate agree on something.

I'll close by asking the commission to allow NC's River Herring fishery to resume next spring. Allowing some harvest would provide valuable data and food while preserving an ancient spring tradition as we work to rebuild this iconic fishery. Hatcheries could quickly boost herring stocks to historically high levels.

Sincerely,

Chris McCaffity



February 13, 2015

NC Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell Street
Morehead City, NC 28557

Director Daniel,

The North Carolina Watermen United (NCWU) is re-submitting our comments in opposition to the state's proposed Logbooks. We first sent them to the NCDMF on February 13, 2015 before the NCMFC Meeting in Wilmington, NC.

Our charter fishermen already have MRIP, intercept, phone and mail-in surveys being conducted. North Carolina commercial fishermen have a trip ticket reporting mechanism which is the best in the country. In addition, law enforcement has traditionally done observations on gillnet activity which has been a very good indicator of bycatch, but LEOs have been removed from this job, and now, 7 to 10 percent of all gillnet activity is being observed.

North Carolina has a very bad track record of subjugating our fishermen to federal and state regulations derived with faulty data and faulty modeling. Red drum, large coastal sharks, menhaden, tilefish, groupers, snappers, speckled trout, grey trout and southern flounder are a few examples.

Red drum have been at, or above, a 40% s.p.r. for how many years? Yet, no commercial, recreational or charter access has been increased, and in many instances, access has been decreased.

North Carolina used to have a robust directed shark fishery. Data collected by our fishermen in joint venture data collection was ignored, as state regulators sat back and watched our directed shark fishery disappear.

Menhaden is a travesty. Our state had better data than any other Atlantic state on menhaden, and yet it was ignored, even as the NCMFC entertained a motion to halt menhaden fishing in coastal waters. This motion passed, and the same Commissioner who proposed the motion still sits on the Commission. The menhaden closure has since been proven to be fatally flawed in peer review, but, our state knew it was flawed beforehand, and yet passed a closure anyway.

Our state is going to allow SAFMC to effectively close our tilefish fishery to commercial, recreational, and charter harvest.

Vast units of catch and effort have been left out of yet another fatally flawed model. Our deepwater snowy grouper fishery was closed, effectively, to all fishermen with data from a

shallow water headboat survey from South Carolina. North Carolina sat idly by as we lost a very important fishery to all users.

Red snapper, and b-liners have also fallen to the whim of the SAFMC. Again, not a whimper from our state that had better data and better modeling.

Grey trout are special. Even as our state took a devastating cut in catch and effort, the scientific community recognized that effort reduction would not increase biomass, but only an increased reduction by predators, namely dogfish and cormorants. The NCWU request to increase trout retention by all groups of fishermen has been ignored, and the explanation led to us awaiting a future ASMFC ruling.

Speckled trout have been pointedly referred to as a species totally unable to be managed by the Division. You, Director Daniel, are on record as proclaiming that this is because of cold stun - events outside of man's control. Yet, our fishermen have suffered continual cuts in recreational, charter and commercial creel limits, and we all have seen minimum sizes increased.

The Division has proposed a supplement process for the southern flounder fishery, after the assessment was rejected by two of three assessors in the Peer Review who cited a faulty model.

These are some examples of our state not using our data, not using the best data, using wrong models or allowing the wrong model to be used with detrimental loss to all fishermen of our state.

Doug Mumford was told over three years ago at a small stakeholder meeting in Manteo that we could not support a logbook program administered by the state.

We reiterate – we are absolutely opposed to the state Logbooks.

Yours truly,

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BTS: mm

cc: Nancy Fish, Liaison
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NCDENR Secretary van der Vaart



NC Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell Street
Morehead City, NC 28577

May 15, 2015

Director Daniel,

The North Carolina Watermen United (NCWU) has been asking for answers to questions we have about the Sea Turtle ITP since last year in November 2014.

I have been investigating the ITP Proclamations from 2004 to the present and have found thirteen (13) Proclamations that show the ITP has not been followed consistently. Important information is in each one of the thirteen.

Ernie Doshier, another NCWU Board member, has also been on record asking for a sit-down meeting with NOAA, NMFS and other stakeholders since November 2014. We have received no answer to this, and he is continuing to work to set up a meeting.

NCWU would like the opportunity to discuss the inconsistencies in the Proclamations at a meeting with the NCDMF, NCMFC, NOAA, NMFS and other stakeholders.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours truly,

Andrew Berry

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AB: mm
Cc: NCMFC
Nancy Fish, Liaison
Chris Batsavage
NCDENR Secretary van der Vaart
NCGA Senators and Representatives



NC Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell Street
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May 15, 2015

Director Daniel,

The North Carolina Watermen United (NCWU) is asking for answers to questions we have about the ITP. These questions were stated in our letter of February 11, 2015 that was entered into the Briefing book for the NCMFC meeting, February 18 – 21, 2015 and also in an earlier letter – November 12, 2014 that was entered into the Briefing Book for the NCMFC meeting on November 19 – 21, 2014.

We want to have a meeting with representatives from NOAA and NMFS and other stakeholders to discuss reassessment and possible amendments to the Sea Turtle ITP.

The only response to our questions was from Chris Batsavage in December 2014. But we have had no response from him or anyone in your office with the further questions we presented in our second letter. And we have had no response from your office about any kind of sit-down meeting. So, I contacted the Southeast Regional Administrator's office and was directed to the South Atlantic Branch of Sustainable Fisheries. I left my contact information for the appropriate folks on Friday, May 1, 2015 and had a call-back on Monday, May 4, 2015.

I spoke with Dennis Klem who said that since NCDMF's name is on the Permit, South Atlantic would prefer that the Division be the one to contact the appropriate offices and administrators. The NCDMF should work with us (NCWU) and other stakeholders to talk about or request any revisions or amendments. He also told me that they (NOAA and NMFS) do not have any problems with a discussion or having questions asked about the ITP, in fact, that is why they are there. This is a ten-year Permit and things can and do change and things that may or may not have been taken into account at the beginning may need to be reviewed with all parties present.

Again, we are asking for a sit-down meeting in the same room with the agencies mentioned in our previous letters. From my phone calls, I have learned that NOAA and NMFS would prefer that NCDMF initiate this process. As I stated earlier, I would rather work on this with the NC Division and staff, but we've not any communication back from you concerning this meeting – which seems to be the way things have gone in recent years.

Please feel free to contact me any time with questions, comments or discussion on this issue.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

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