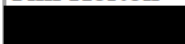


N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission
 May 25-26, 2022
 Online Comments

#	First name:	Last name:	State	Please type your comments in the box below.
1	Chris	McCaffity	North Carolina	Please pass a resolution requesting the base of offshore windmills be designed as permanent artificial reef habitat and ensuring citizens can continue accessing the tens of thousands of acres of public waters being leased to private corporations. Please support a moratorium on any new leases that could restrict the public's freedom to access our public waters. Please support a moratorium on introducing genetically sterilized or otherwise modified species in public waters. Please limit public water aquaculture to stocking native seafood that can naturally reproduce and is accessible to everyone. Thank you.
2	Jerry	James	North Carolina	Please send amendment #3 Flounder back for more consideration and info
3	William	Autrey	North Carolina	I would like to submit to an increase in the amount of crab pots for residential use from 5 (in the river) to 10. I am finding that my pots are being pulled and emptied each day by someone, before I get a chance to check them. As it stands now I am unable to catch a single bushel per week. An increase in the number of pots would help. [REDACTED]
4	Mac	Currin	North Carolina	Please finally reduce the total harvest of southern flounder enough to allow this overfished stock to recover. The MFC has delayed effective management measures for far too long- since I was on the MFC in 2005. The fishing power of the commercial industry is far too great to allow unrestricted access via other fisheries. Keep the current closed areas and cap the dead discards, by-catch and the recreational overages so that this stock can rebound. Striped bass also need protection from over harvest due to directed fisheries and discards. Stock biomass is low and would benefit most from a total moratorium on harvest. Absent that, severe harvest restrictions on harvest by both sectors in the ASFMA would be appropriate. Thank you, Mac Currin [REDACTED], NC
5	HEATHER	MAIN	North Carolina	BAN ALL GILL NET FISHING IN NC. THIS AFFECTS ALL LARGE AND SMALL FISH. THE BY CATCH IS SIGNIFICANT AND YOU ARE NOT COUNTING THE BY CATCH. MOST STATES

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				<p>HAVE BANNED GILL NET FISHING!!</p> <p>FERTILIZER RUNOFF FROM FARMS AND HOUSING AREAS ON THE COASTAL WATERWAYS OF NC IS KILLING OFF THE SEA GRASSES IN THE SOUND SIDE OF ALL COASTAL AREAS IN NC. ASK FARMS NOT TO USE FERTILIZER AND ALSO TO BLOCK DRAINAGE. WE NEED TO LIMIT RUNOFF FROM FARMS AND HOUSING. THESE GRASSES ARE THE BREEDING HABITAT FOR FISH AND CRABS.</p> <p>ASK FARMS TO PAY FOR REPLANTING SEA GRASSES IN THE WATERS NEAR THE FARMS.</p> <p>ENCOURAGE SHRIMP FARMING INSTEAD OF SHRIMP BOAT DREDGING THAT TEARS UP THE GRASSES FOR HABITAT. PROTECT OUR HABITATS.</p> <p>DO NOT ALLOW DEVELOPMENT AND TIMBERING WITHIN A 1/2 MILE OF ANY WATERWAY OR COASTAL HABITAT. PROTECT OUR BEAUTIFUL COASTAL HABITATS.</p>
6	Tim	Horton	North Carolina	<p>Dear commission members, you all know that Southern Flounder Amendment Plan 3 is a bad deal. It is a result of years of neglectful management of the fishery by you and your predecessors. You failed the recreational fishermen. You failed my 70 year old dad who loves flounder fishing and has several citations under his belt but is still trying for his 10 lb-er. You failed my 6 year old son, who is just old enough this year to go spend a day fishing with me and his Papa. But, Ammendment 3 penalizes us, the innocent, along with all other recreational fishermen, for your failures. The commercial fishing industry will be allowed to rape our inland waters and estuaries again this year, leaving less fish for us to catch. That's your fault. And now, you've told us we can only keep one fish per day. I hope each of you realizes how your weakness and lack of courage to make hard choices for commercial fishing affects innocent people like my family. I expect weak people beholden to special interests to continue to make self-serving decisions. But, I do hope, either through elections, political action, legal action, or a true change of heart by the few courageous members, you decide to dramatically lower the commercial quota to make room for citizen fishermen & fisherwomen to catch enough flounder to have a fish fry with friends. Stop inshore trawling which destroys the young fish populations. You know what's right and wrong for the people of NC. The power to do the right thing is in your hands.</p> <p>Respectfully, but completely demoralized about losing the chance to fish with my family.</p> <p>Tim Horton </p>

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7	Ken	Redman	North Carolina	Any commercial harvest mechanisms allowed in the Neuse and Tar/Pamlico sound areas that deplete any of the wanted fish species either by netting or shrimp trawling should be obviously be discontinued temporarily until the stocks replenish. It seems we have talked about this for years to no avail because the politician representatives "down east" have been bought and sold by the commercial industry since forever. It doesn't require a "rocket" scientist to neither recognize this or fix this issue. It simply requires "integrity" by our State government leaders to implement common sense replenishment. Maybe if our government leaders are too corrupted by the commercial industry, we can get the Federal gov't to come in and show them how to manage properly as a multi-state task force!
8	Stephen	Moore	North Carolina	I continue to be horrified that North Carolina permits gill nets. These are indiscriminate killers that are destroying both the recreational and commerical fishing in our state. It is time to join with the other states in the SouthEast and totally ban this method of fishing.
9	Linwood	Grant	North Carolina	Please keep gill nets out of the inland waters. Recreation fishermen pay most of the bills for anything related to the fisheries and the economy in NC and get only a small percent of the fish that are taken. When gill nets are used, all types of young game fish are in the mix which anyone would know eliminates future game fish of adult size. Please eliminate the politics by those who spend the money on politicians to the detriment of future fishing in North Carolina.
10	Ronald	Mincey	North Carolina	I respectfully request that the gill net ban currently in place for the upper Neuse and Pamlico Rivers remain in effect. It is clear to me that non use of gill nets is improving the fish recovery. Thank you, Ronald M. Mincey
11	scott	hull	North Carolina	In regards to the gill netting in the nc rivers or and icw including Brunswick county,, this netting must stop. I read your data which is totally absurd. Common sense will tell you without the stupid data that the gill nets are the hugest part in the reduction of fishes that all of us , especially nc residents, have the right to enjoy to catch and eat. The nets are killing all the babies by bycatch. You must stop this. If it proceeds none of the upcoming generations will have the chance to enjoy our waters..a failure to so will cause a problem for decades or more to come. Everything isn't about the commercial fishermen .what they going to do when the fishes are depleted? FIX IT NOW!
12	Sheila	hull	North Carolina	In Regards to the gill netting in the nc rivers or and icw including Brunswick county,, this netting must stop. I read your data which is totally absurd. Common sense will tell you without the stupid data that the gill nets are the hugest part in the reduction of fishes that all of us , especially nc residents, have the right to enjoy to catch and eat. The nets are killing all the babies by bycatch. You must stop this. If it proceeds none of the upcoming generations will have the chance to enjoy our waters..a failure to so will cause a problem for

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				decades or more to come. Everything isn't about the commercial fishermen .what they going to do when the fishes are depleted? FIX IT NOW
13	Ben	Hull	North Carolina	Please stop gill netting !!!!
14	David	Murphy	North Carolina	As a recreational fisherman I do not support lifting the gill net ban above the Ferry lines in the Neuse and Pamlico in accordance with Amendment 2 to the Striped Bass FMP. The harvest numbers do not support the claim that there has been a negative impact on commercial fisherman. In fact, the data show an increase in catches in 2020. Recreational fishing brings in far more money to the state than commercial fishing, please do not lift the ban.
15	David	LeMoine	North Carolina	I would like to ask the Commission to continue with the gill net restrictions until such time as it can be confirmed with data that the fish stocks are recovering to a healthy level. Further, the Commission should initiate such a study conducted by an unbiased entity. Thank you.
16	David	Belk	North Carolina	I love fishing and want to see healthy NC fish stocks. Please no not lift the gill net closures. Further gill net restrictions/bans are necessary to ensure the health of our fishery.
17	Billy	Trivette	North Carolina	Please continue and/or increase the gill net restrictions in the Neuse and Pamlico rivers. Please consider larger gill net bans/restrictions to include all of NC's inland coastal waters. Thanks for your time Billy Trivette
18	Terry	Hackett	North Carolina	I am writing today to submit comments on the proposed draft amendment 2 of the Estuarine Striped Bass fishery management plan. As a concerned citizen and avid angler, I believe that the gill net ban under this plan should remain in place. The science shows that gill net interactions are a significant factor on the cryptic mortality of striped bass in the management area. The gill net restrictions in the plan, along with a harvest moratorium on recreational and commercial fishermen, should remain in place until a study has been conducted to determine if the stock is indeed recovering and what impact the removal of nets is having on fish stocks in these rivers.
19	John	Boyte	North Carolina	MFC Members, I am a 68 year old, life long angler both fresh and saltwater and am in favor of: 1. Continuing to restrict or ban use of gill nets in the Neuse and Pamlico rivers. 2. More restrictions on shrimp trawling in the sounds - habitat destruction and bycatch. Thank you for your service.

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20	Corey	Keffer	North Carolina	<p>I have fished the Neuse River for 30 years. While weather, wind, and other natural environmental factors definitely play a significant role in catches, I have never seen the number and quality of fish on the Neuse River as I have since the net ban above the ferry lines. The past 3 seasons of cool weather speckled trout fishing have been incredible. The quantity and size of trout caught around the New Bern area has been better than any season that I can remember.</p> <p>In the warmer months, catch and release striped bass fishing is a major part of the targeted fishing we do. In the past 3 years, the increase in numbers and size of fish has been unbelievable. In years past, a 27" striper was a once or twice a year catch. Since the net bans and striped bass moratorium, it is not uncommon to catch several fish this size or greater on any given fishing trip.</p> <p>I am not a scientist and I have no desire to hinder any person or group from making a living or from being able to keep fish to eat. That being said, from my own personal experience the net bans seem to be helping the fishery. Commercial and recreational anglers alike have seemed to survive just fine since the ban. If the primary objective of the bans is to help the fishery, then I cannot see any reason to lift them.</p>
21	Lenny	Smathers	North Carolina	<p>Please do not remove the gill net restrictions on the Neuse and Pamlico rivers. They are working.</p>
22	Will	Anders	North Carolina	<p>I strongly support continuing the ban on gill nets above the ferry line, and the science clearly shows that this is working. The only harm that is coming from this is to the incomes of a relatively small number of commercial fishermen, and the benefits that come from the ban are much more significant and spread across a vast number of constituents, while also ensuring the long term viability of our natural resources which have for years been depleted by commercial interests who have been allowed to take the vast majority of current resources (fish) while also destroying future resources through bycatch.</p> <p>As for flounder regs, I do not like the idea of a meaningfully reduced season for recreational anglers but I am supportive of it as a means of helping the stock rebound. With that said, I can't fathom why we would allow commercial interests to not only take as much as they do on a relative basis but also do so in a manner that destroys future resources through bycatch. It's similar to the gill net issue and a clear example of the state allowing a relatively small number of entrenched commercial interests to deplete the resources of all current and future citizens of the state.</p>
23	James	Miller	North Carolina	<p>North Carolina is the only state on the eastern seaboard that allows in-shore netting. Shrimp and fill nets should only be allowed to net off shore. All the other states do it. Why can't we. It's really sad that we pay for recreational fishing licenses each year and try to take our kids out and there's no fish to be found and caught. Look at Louisiana. They certainly know how to properly regulate the fishing laws. I see posts on</p>

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				social media the bows are completely cover with trout and Drum. If it keeps going in this direction, commercial fishermen will have to get a different job. Save our waters!
24	Stuart	Creighton	North Carolina	<p>Good evening all and thank you for the chance to make comments on these important issues. Brevity is difficult when facing decisions that will have such far-reaching consequences. Nonetheless, here are some important facts on the management plans you are considering.</p> <p>I'll start with striped bass on the ASMA.</p> <p>This population is the LAST one in NC that is still capable of a self sustaining spawn. To that end, any management measures that are approved should favor conservation and rebuilding of the stock. With the recent run of five consecutive years of failed spawns, a closure should be enacted with a gill net removal similar to the one that was enacted three years ago in the CSMA. Commercial harvest in the Albemarle Sound has become primarily blue catfish and shad. Gill nets can be effectively replaced with trot lines and pots. Shad can be harvested in the open sound with a very limited use of gill nets on a slightly shifted season. Making these changes would allow for a gill net ban in the western Albemarle Sound and surrounding rivers with minimal economic impact to commercial interests.</p> <p>REGARDLESS OF THE MANAGEMENT MEASURES CHOSEN MFC MEMBERS MUST GET THESE DECISIONS RIGHT, OR WE WILL LOSE OUR LAST SPAWNING POPULATION.</p> <p>For the CSMA:</p> <p>The NCFA is making an attempt to bring nets back in above the ferry lines on the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers because they did not like the decision made by the MFC in their February meeting. Commissioners voted by a 6-3 supermajority to keep the nets out of these areas. That vote is not insignificant and should carry enough weight to keep the Commission's original vote intact. Part of the NCFA's claim is that the original vote to remove the gill nets from these areas was made without science, which is patently false. Consider these points that follow, some of which are a repeat of my February remarks.</p> <p>---In the "big book", online public comment shows 60% of those that responded wanted the gill net ban to continue, only 12% of respondents wanted the nets put back in those areas. That is very strong public support for keeping the nets out.</p> <p>---Claims of a lack of science are not true. The Rachels/Ricks study from 2018 showed that gill net interactions were the main source of cryptic mortality of striped bass in these areas, something the NCFA neglects to mention.</p> <p>---Divisional studies cited by former Director Murphey that related tie down restrictions to striped bass interactions were significantly short on observations. (119 in 9 years on three river systems, which averaged out to 6 observations per river per year.) That is a lot of water to monitor, and 6 per year is simply not enough. Furthermore, under what weather conditions were these observations made? What were the water</p>

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				<p>levels? Salinities? Dissolved oxygen content? These factors and others can affect the position and movement of fish. Unless numerous observations were made in all of these conditions, these studies would be insufficient.</p> <p>---American shad are overfished COASTWIDE, and allowing nets back in these areas to target these fish is not wise.</p> <p>---Southern flounder stocks are in dire shape and new, severe restrictions will be enacted during this meeting. Flounder are a key targeted fishery in these areas. So, again, why allow nets back in to harvest a fish that is immediately facing such significant harvest reductions?</p> <p>---With the recently released stock assessment, striped mullet are overfished with overfishing occurring. Once again, why allow nets back in to target yet another fishery that is under stress?</p> <p>---The claims of a lack of access to the fisheries is not true. Since the net bans have been in place, river specific harvests of significant species specific fisheries HAVE NOT BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED. Harvest data on both the Neuse and Tar/Pamlico Rivers show the same thing. Since 2019, harvest of speckled trout and striped mullet have increased notably. Red drum harvest remains constant, and southern flounder harvest is down, but that is from the restrictions enacted from amendment 2. I must stress this again, commercial fishermen are NOT losing access to their fisheries. Harvest levels have either increased or remained steady in each river system since the net bans have been enacted.</p> <p>---The restrictions ARE WORKING!!! Anecdotally, I can confirm that the stripers are present in greater numbers and with greater size since the restrictions have been enacted. Fishing for other species, especially red drum, has improved dramatically.</p> <p>---Has the Division done any studies on these regions in the three years since the gill net bans have been enacted? If so, what are their findings? If not, why not??? These are living laboratories that can offer a wealth of information on the true impacts of the currently allowed commercial fishing gears if the Division will take advantage of this chance to learn.</p> <p>---Finally, I respectfully urge all commissioners that voted to keep the nets out at the February meeting to repeat that vote this time. You should consider the message it sends if you reverse your decision.</p> <p>IF THE MFC HAS THE TAMARITY TO REVERSE ITS FEBRUARY VOTE, THEN RECREATIONAL ACCESS TO STRIPED BASS SHOULD BE IMMEDIATELY RETURNED AND MANAGED AS A PUT/GROW/TAKE FISHERY.</p> <p>Some points to consider about southern flounder before your final vote:</p> <p>---Thirty years of deliberate commercial overfishing is responsible for putting us in this position. This industry should be bearing the brunt of these pending restrictions through a closure and gear removal.</p> <p>---This amendment does NOTHING to address the significant loss of juvenile southern flounder in the shrimp trawl industry. There is a well established hotspot for juvenile southern flounder in the western</p>

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				<p>Pamlico Sound near the mouths of the Neuse and Tar/Pamlico Rivers. This area should be closed to all trawling for at least the life of Amendment 3.</p> <p>---The lack of species specific management that is denying ocean access to the recreational industry is patently unfair. Summer and gulf flounder fishing in the ocean should be allowed during times of the year when southern flounder have migrated to inside waters.</p> <p>---Harvest of summer and gulf flounder should not be counted as southern flounder.</p> <p>---MRIP estimates were NEVER intended to manage a quota driven fishery. Real time harvest measuring methods should be in place before recreational quotas are enacted.</p> <p>---Large mesh gill nets should be removed from the commercial flounder fishery. Doing so would remove the need for one of the ITPs and would also remove the need for a failed observer program.</p> <p>---Because of the low recreational quota, repeated closures are likely, removing recreational access to yet another fishery in NC.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration, Stuart Creighton CCA NC Fisheries</p>
25	Romulus	McCoy	North Carolina	<p>I give my comments from Boca Grande Florida while I am on a fishing vacation. I live and saltwater fish in North Carolina but I catch saltwater fish in South Carolina, Florida and Mississippi. These states, SC, FL and MS manage the saltwater resource and do not worry where to put a gill net in their inshore waters. They learned how to manage their saltwater resource in the 1990's. Both their commercial and recreational fishing flourish while we in NC continue to divide up our depleted saltwater resource vs manage the resource for current and future NC residents! I retired in NC because I was born in NC but I am looking to move away because I live to catch saltwater fish not just fish! When will this Commission learn to manage and not just decide? Not in my lifetime but maybe in my grandson's?</p>
26	Cameron	Coley	North Carolina	<p>I strongly support maintaining the gill net restrictions on the Neuse and Pamlico rivers.</p> <p>The science supports the need (see NC Wildlife Resources Commission study by K. Rachels, and B, Ricks). There are always impacts to constituents out of the water (commercial fishermen and consumer), but the landing data shows that landings are up in 2020 vs. 2018 and 2019. That informs my perspective that the restrictions are working and provide a solution that is beneficial to the resource AND stakeholders in the commercial/consumer segment.</p> <p>Cameron Coley</p>
27	David	Sneed	North Carolina	<p>The Coastal Conservation Association North Carolina would like to offer the following public comments ahead of the May meeting of the NC Marine Fisheries Commission. Unfortunately, your online portal for</p>

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				<p>comments will not accept the graphs that should accompany this message. A picture is truly worth a thousand words, so we will have to bring those pictures to the meeting next week.</p> <p>First, looking at the final vote on the restrictions outlined in Amendment 3 to the Southern Flounder Fisheries Management Plan (FMP).</p> <p>Do not forget that it was 30 years of deliberate overfishing by the commercial industry that put the stock in such a depleted state. Reversing the decision to fairly allocate the available harvest to recreational anglers immediately is nothing short of hypocritical. Arguing that the commercial industry is entitled to keep 70% of the harvest because they have historically been responsible for 80+% of harvest on an overfished stock makes absolutely no sense.</p> <p>Now, the commercial industry is trying to deflect attention from this fact by arguing that Southern flounder is a coastwise stock, so North Carolina cannot be expected to properly manage this fishery for the citizens of North Carolina. They ask, "can fishing practices occurring only in North Carolina be responsible for the simultaneous decline of a coastwide fish stock shared by multiple states?" Well, the answer is, of course, YES, given the impact commercial fishing practices in NC have on that total coastwide stock. They also will try to deflect the decades of overharvest of Southern flounder onto the recreational sector. Well, it is kind of hard to ignore the 800-pound gorilla in the room that is responsible for 98.5% of the total coastwide commercial harvest of Southern flounder.</p> <p>The Commission has continued to reject this opportunity to remove large mesh gill nets from this fishery and reallocate the quota to the cleaner harvest methods of pound nets and giggers. Contrary to another popular argument, this would not affect the availability of flounder to NC consumers. While the harvest of ocean flounder species remains closed to recreational anglers, commercial harvest of ocean flounder continues, including an almost 3.4-million-pound quota for summer flounder landed in NC.</p> <p>The recent recreational overages were the result of "derby" fishing brought about by insufficient management action from the Southern Flounder Amendment 2. Harvest and overage estimates that are provided by MRIP data were NEVER intended to be used to manage a fishery through a quota. Additional funding should be secured to develop a better method of collecting data real time before a recreational quota is initiated. DMF has to find a way to manage depleted stocks in such a way that anglers do not get caught in the recovery trap. More fish from a recovering stock means more anglers with more interactions. This leads to more discards and higher discard mortality, which can lead to a loss of access to the fishery. Would a better data collection system also help avoid the recovery trap?</p>

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				<p>CCA NC continues to support species specific management of our three flounder species to give recreational anglers access to an ocean flounder fishery. Doing so would give anglers equitable access to ocean flounder during times of the year when Southern flounder have moved to inside waters.</p> <p>Amendment 3 does not do enough to hold commercial fishermen responsible for Southern flounder dead discards or juveniles killed as bycatch. Amendment 3 does nothing to account for juvenile Southern flounder killed as bycatch in the shrimp trawling industry. Divisional data shows a clear hotspot of juvenile Southern flounder in the western Pamlico Sound near the mouths of the Neuse and Tar/Pamlico Rivers. This area is heavily trawled, resulting in the death of hundreds of thousands of immature Southern flounder every year. Trawling should be stopped in this area for at least the duration of Southern Flounder Amendment 3. In addition, well-trained, neutral observers should be placed on board shrimp trawlers throughout other areas of Pamlico Sound to better quantify just how many are lost as bycatch.</p> <p>ESTUARINE STRIPED BASS FMP AMENDMENT 2 KEY POINTS:</p> <p>At the last MFC meeting, thanks to some great public comments, the Commission voted 6-3 to remove the management option of allowing the nets back in the water above the ferry lines on the Neuse and Tar/Pamlico rivers. However, the NCFA is not happy with this ruling, and, through the standing AC's, is attempting to get those nets returned to the water.</p> <p>Any vote to add this option back to the amendment would require a supermajority vote. By statute, that is six votes.</p> <p>The initial push was to allow nets in for shad fishing. Remember that American Shad are overfished COASTWIDE, so it makes no sense to allow nets back in to harvest a stock that is already overfished throughout its range.</p> <p>Southern flounder stocks are severely depleted. Why allow nets back into these areas when we are actively trying to recover this stock?</p> <p>The latest stock assessment for striped mullet indicates that stock is also overfished and overfishing is occurring. Why open more waters to gill nets when the top species harvested on the Neuse and Pamlico is already classified as overfished?</p> <p>Interactions with endangered species, specifically sturgeon will increase. Remember that DMF sampling surveys on the ASMA had to be halted because of sturgeon interactions. A similar possibility exists if nets</p>

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				<p>are allowed back on the rivers of the CSMA.</p> <p>Divisional studies claiming a lack of interactions with striped bass based on tie down restrictions are woefully short on data...sample size...# of observations. At the February meeting, CCA NC commented that it amounted to 19 observations per year on all the rivers, or 6 observations per river, per year. That's not many observations on a LARGE volume of water.</p> <p>The commercial industry is pushing the argument that the decision was not based on science and that the consumer is suffering because of loss of access. First to the science. This rhetoric continues to ignore the NC Wildlife Resources Commission study published by Kyle Rachels and Ben Ricks in 2018 that showed that gill net interactions were a significant factor on the cryptic mortality of striped bass in these areas. And unfortunately, the commercial harvest numbers simply do not back up any claims that harvest has suffered and impacted the consumer. On both river systems, harvest of red drum remains relatively constant following two years of net restrictions above the ferry lines. Southern flounder has decreased due to the new regulations applied. Commercial speckled trout and mullet harvest has increased in both river systems since the gill net ban has been in place. This is a key point - THE GILL NET RESTRICTIONS HAVE NOT IMPACTED LOCAL, RIVER SPECIFIC COMMERCIAL HARVEST OF IMPORTANT SPECIES AT ALL.</p> <p>For anglers, these restrictions certainly appear to be working. Anecdotally, anglers that fish these areas repeatedly confirm an increase in the number and size of striped bass. In addition, fishing for other species such as red drum and speckled trout has reached levels not seen in decades. Has the Division done any studies on these areas or any of the specific fisheries found in them in the three years that the net ban has been in place? Would it not be prudent to have some full years of data collection first before throwing out the rules for a very select few fishermen?</p> <p>Finally, a couple of points for the ASMA/RRMA:</p> <p>The ASMA is the LAST native striped bass population in NC that is capable of a self-sustaining spawn. Whatever management measures are selected, they must favor conservation and rebuilding.</p> <p>We know the invasive blue catfish is problematic, but do we know just how problematic? Has the Division done catfish specific studies? To what degree have they analyzed stomach contents, etc...?</p> <p>Shad and catfish are the dominant harvest in the ASMA, and that can continue with the use of trot lines and very limited gill netting in the open sound. Commercial pots for catfish, as are used in Louisiana, could be a</p>

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				<p>viable, clean option for harvesting blue cats in the Albemarle Sound. Gear that interferes with the rebuilding of the striped bass stock should be removed.</p> <p>Supplemental stocking should continue on all NC rivers.</p> <p>Thank you for your service and your consideration. Please make this the meeting where the Commission puts the health and long-term viability of our coastal resources first.</p>
28	Jonathan	Edwards	North Carolina	<p>Gill nets were removed from above the ferry lines of the CSMA to protect naturally occurring spawning classes of striped bass. Has there been any studies since this action and the recreational moratorium to determine if the stock is replenishing itself? There should be no restrictions lifted until studies show the stock is recovering.</p> <p>NC Wildlife Resources Commission study published by Kyle Rachels and Ben Ricks in 2018 showed gill net interactions were a significant factor on the cryptic mortality of striped bass in these areas. The gill net restrictions in the CSMA were put into place, along with a harvest moratorium on recreational and commercial fishermen, to help recover a depleted striped bass population. They should remain in place until a study has been conducted to determine if the stock is indeed recovering and what impact the removal of nets is having on fish stocks in these rivers. If the nets go back in, then angler access to these fish, that they pay to stock, should also be restored.</p>
29	Clark	Beeson	North Carolina	<p>The proposed 1-fish flounder limit is a blatant insult intended to milk as much money out of recreational fishermen as possible. Considering today's inflated fuel and relate costs, there is an economic disincentive for recreational anglers to chase flounder with a one-fish limit.</p> <p>Instead, DMF should close both commercial and recreational flounder harvest, including shrimp trawl bycatch, for a year to help the stocks recover.</p> <p>Alternatively, DMF should authorize a shorter flounder season with a catch limit of 4 fish or higher.</p> <p>In any event, the size limits for all fisheries should be the same for commercial and recreational fishermen. Allowing commercial fishermen a smaller size limit is grossly negligent.</p>
30	Concerned	Citizen	North Carolina	<p>Greed Greed and more Greed. It's a sad day when greed rules over sound science and common sense. NC is a National Disgrace and Embarrassment. I've watched our fisheries decline over the last 50 years with no serious effort to stop the abuse. The damaging practices in NC waters are in my opinion criminal. I feel sorry for my children and grandchildren for they will never see a healthy fishery in NC unless drastic measures are taken immediately. We are witnessing the collapse of the greatest coastal fishery in the nation. Man Will Destroy What He Touches.</p>

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31	Ronald	Baucom	North Carolina	<p>As to the upcoming 2022 flounder season. May I make my request and my thoughts. Instead of only allowing just 1 flounder per person which I think is too much of a loss to the recreational fisherman. My suggestion is as follows: Allow 3 flounder per person go to 16 inches in size and have a 30 day flounder season. Your new suggestion of one flounder per person. Will cause a lot of lost income to the local economy like bait and tackle owners and charter services. I thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to listen to an old flounder fisherman. Thank you for all your hard work</p>
32	Barry	Thomas	North Carolina	<p>Please keep the ban on nets above the ferry area in the Neuse River in place. We are seeing the positive effects that the ban is producing. Please don't reverse the ban to the detriment of the recovering fish populations. Thanks Barry Thomas</p>
33	Christopher	Elkins	North Carolina	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Flounder Amendment 3 and the Striped Bass Amendment 2. My name is Chris Elkins PhD from ██████████, NC. Why does this form not allow graphics to be pasted in? This is 2022.</p> <p>--For 2022, a season window from Aug. 16 – Sept. 30 in which one flounder per person, per day can be harvested until the 160,000 lb quota is reached. Minimum length remains at 15". Since NC does not distinguish between individual flounder species, any summer or gulf flounder caught will count towards this quota. This is the only time any flounder may be harvested from any NC waters. --For 2023, a spring season from March 1 – April 15 COULD be opened IF recreational anglers do not exceed the quota and do not have paybacks that will shorten the season. Any flounder caught during this season will be applied to the yearly total and could shorten the fall season. --For 2023, and beyond, the flounder season will be determined after any quota overages from the previous year are subtracted. Included in the overage determination will be estimates of dead discards, which is currently 9% of all releases. Between dead discards and quota overages, it is possible (some would say likely) that recreational anglers will be completely shut out of harvesting flounder in subsequent seasons. This is a de facto recreational fishing moratorium.</p> <p>SOUTHERN FLOUNDER AMENDMENT 3 KEY POINTS: If you choose to discuss flounder, below are some talking points to consider:</p> <p>--Do not forget that it was 30 years of deliberate overfishing by the commercial industry that put the stock in such a depleted state.</p>

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				<p>--Previous attempts at significant harvest restrictions were met with the typical deny, deflect, and delay tactics of the NCFA. Culminating in a 2016 lawsuit that prevented the MFC from taking any significant actions on the harvest of Southern flounder until the next stock assessment was completed.</p> <p>--Removing large mesh gill nets will not affect the availability of flounder to NC consumers. While the harvest of ocean flounder species remains closed to recreational anglers, commercial harvest of ocean flounder continues, including an almost 3.4-million-pound quota for summer flounder landed in NC:</p> <p>--The recent recreational overages were the result of “derby” fishing brought about by insufficient management action from flounder amendment #2.</p> <p>--Harvest and overage estimates that are provided by MRIP data were NEVER intended to be used to manage a fishery through a quota. Additional funding should be secured to develop a better method of collecting data real time before a recreational quota is initiated.</p> <p>--Amendment 3 does not do enough to hold commercial fishermen responsible for Southern flounder dead discards or juveniles killed as bycatch. Crab pots, clam kicking, and the use of large mesh gill nets are all significant sources of discards in the commercial industry. Amendment 3 does nothing to account for juvenile Southern flounder killed as bycatch in the shrimp trawling industry. Divisional data shows a clear hotspot of juvenile Southern flounder in the western Pamlico Sound near the mouths of the Neuse and Tar/Pamlico Rivers. This area is heavily trawled, resulting in the death of hundreds of thousands of immature Southern flounder every year. Trawling should be stopped in this area for at least the duration of Southern Flounder Amendment 3. In addition, well-trained, neutral observers should be placed on board shrimp trawlers throughout other areas of Pamlico Sound to better quantify just how many are lost as bycatch.</p> <p>-- SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT OF OUR THREE FLOUNDER SPECIES MUST BE IMPLEMENTED.</p> <p>--DMF has to find a way to manage depleted stocks in such a way that anglers do not get caught in the recovery trap. More fish from a recovering stock means more anglers with more interactions. This leads to more discards and higher discard mortality, which can lead to a loss of access to the fishery. Would a better data collection system also help avoid the recovery trap?</p>

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				<p>ESTUARINE STRIPED BASS FMP AMENDMENT 2 KEY POINTS: Most importantly for the May meeting is the continued battle over striped bass.</p> <p>First a synopsis of where we are right now:</p> <p>CSMA POINTS TO CONSIDER:</p> <p>--The MFC has already voted to keep the nets out of the water above the ferry lines in the Neuse and Tar/Pamlico Rivers, and, has done so with a SUPERMAJORITY. Respectfully, I remind the commissioners of the significance of that vote and what it would mean to reverse it.</p> <p>--The initial push was to allow nets in for shad fishing. Remember that American Shad are overfished COASTWIDE, so it makes no sense to allow nets back in to harvest a stock that is already overfished throughout its range.</p> <p>--Southern flounder stocks are severely depleted. Why allow nets back into these areas when we are actively trying to recover this stock?</p> <p>--The latest stock assessment for striped mullet indicates that stock is also overfished and overfishing is occurring. Why open more waters to gill nets when the top species harvested on the Neuse and Pamlico is already classified as overfished?</p> <p>--Interactions with endangered species, specifically sturgeon will increase. Remember that DMF sampling surveys on the ASMA had to be halted because of sturgeon interactions. A similar possibility exists if nets are allowed back on the rivers of the CSMA.</p> <p>--Divisional studies claiming a lack of interactions with striped bass based on tie down restrictions are woefully short on data...sample size...# of observations. At the February meeting, CCA NC commented that it amounted to 19 observations per year on all the rivers, or 6 observations per river per year. That's not many observations on a LARGE volume of water.</p> <p>--The NCFA is touting short seasons with highly effective gear to harvest shad, flounder, and mullet using primarily "selective" large mesh gill nets. We all know of the high bycatch rates in this gear. Also, they aren't mentioning much about using small mesh nets to strike for trout, which surely will have a significant interaction with stripers.</p> <p>--Commercial harvest numbers do not justify putting the nets back in the water. On both river systems, harvest of red drum remains relatively constant. Southern flounder has decreased due to the new regulations applied. Speckled trout and mullet harvest has increased in both river systems since the gill net ban has been in place. This is a key point!!! THE GILL NET RESTRICTIONS HAVE NOT IMPACTED LOCAL, RIVER SPECIFIC HARVEST OF IMPORTANT SPECIES AT ALL.</p>

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				<p>--The NCFA claims that this decision was not based on science. However, they continue to ignore the NC Wildlife Resources Commission study published by Kyle Rachels and Ben Ricks in 2018 that showed that gill net interactions were a significant factor on the cryptic mortality of striped bass in these areas.</p> <p>--They will claim that re-opening these areas to gill nets will reduce user conflicts downriver. They keep forgetting that it is the use of gill nets that is the source of the user conflict.</p> <p>--These restrictions ARE WORKING!! Anecdotally, anglers that fish these areas repeatedly confirm an increase in the number and size of striped bass. In addition, fishing for other species such as red drum and speckled trout has reached levels not seen in decades.</p> <p>--Has the Division done any studies on these areas or any of the specific fisheries found in them in the three years that the net ban has been in place??</p> <p>ASMA/RRMA POINTS: Finally, a couple of points for the ASMA/RRMA:</p> <p>--The ASMA is the LAST native striped bass population in NC that is capable of a self-sustaining spawn. Whatever management measures are selected, they must favor conservation and rebuilding.</p> <p>--We know the invasive blue catfish is problematic, but do we know just how problematic? Has the Division done catfish specific studies? To what degree have they analyzed stomach contents, etc...?</p> <p>--Gill nets are not required to harvest blue catfish. Fish traps work just fine. Just Google commercial fish traps in LA for blue catfish. (here's one: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mp6jYuQvvKE) Go to the 12 minute mark.</p> <p>--Though it will be economically impactful to communities like Weldon and Jamesville, a harvest closure on striped bass, with a similar gill net removal as was done on the CSMA, is likely the most appropriate management measure until the stock has recovered.</p> <p>--Shad and catfish are the dominant harvest in the ASMA, and that can continue with the use of trot lines and very limited gill netting in the open sound. Commercial pots for catfish, as are used in Louisiana, could be a viable, clean option for harvesting blue cats in the Albemarle Sound.</p> <p>--Continued poor spawns, including the very disappointing failure in 2021, may be the strongest supporting evidence for a closure.</p> <p>--With or without a closure, HEAVY stocking should continue on all NC rivers.</p> <p>CAPE FEAR STRIPED BASS POINTS TO CONSIDER From a National Geographic article published March 24, 2020, catching a striped bass out of North</p>

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				<p>Carolina’s Cape Fear River, and it’s likely you’ve just hoisted up a swimming vessel for PFAS, a family of long-lasting chemicals found in many consumer products and fire-fighting foams. Of the fish tested for the chemical in a study recently published in the journal Environment International, all had elevated levels of PFAS. Compared to previous studies in 2015 and 2001, the North Carolina stripers have the highest rates of PFAS documented in North American fish. So far, no PFAS consumption advisory is in place in North Carolina, and many of the potential impacts on people are still unknown.</p> <p>Importantly, if you look at the potential number of NC citizens impacted (children and women of childbearing age), its between 25 and 35% of people (US Census age grouping). The Division goes apoplectic for a very small number of people who get Vibriosis so an equal education effort should be made for this issue.</p> <p>More should be known about the potential health risks to the public from consuming wild-caught striped bass from the Cape Fear River before the harvest moratorium is lifted.</p> <p>PROTECTED RESOURCES PROGRAM UPDATE The Observer Program continues to be an abysmal failure. From the Briefing Book annual report to the Commission:</p> <p>The Observer Program continues to have difficulty scheduling observed trips with fishers. Out of 1,396 phone calls and in-person contacts across all seasons, observers spoke with a fisher 35% of the time, but were only successful in scheduling a trip 1% of the time (n=14 trips). This means that of the 544 observations (379 large mesh, 165 small mesh), 530 of them occurred because observers or Marine Patrol officers searched for and found effort on the water using the alternative platform approach. Observers and Marine Patrol officers made an additional 1,092 (145 and 947, respectively) unsuccessful attempts to find and observe a trip using alternative platform across all seasons. As such, searching for effort on the water provided a success rate of only 33%.</p> <p>It should be no surprise to anyone that Incidental takes of sea turtles during the 2021 ITP Year were below authorized levels.</p> <p>The Observer Program contains a provision for suspending and revoking a commercial gill net permit for failure to cooperate with the observers when attempting to schedule trips. There is even a category for recording contact responses entitled, “Hung up, got angry, trip refused”. How many of these licenses have been suspended or revoked given the dismal compliance record of fishermen? The answer is, less than one.</p>

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				<p>Management of the large mesh gill net fishery continues to consume a large portion of the time and resources of the NC DMF despite the decline in the Total Allowable Catch of target species such as Southern flounder. During the latest ITP management year, no less than 20 proclamations were issued by the Director in the management of large mesh gill nets. As part of their regular duties, Marine Patrol officers checked gill nets for compliance and issued 65 citations. Only with the assistance of Marine Patrol was the observer coverage able to exceed the minimum threshold for both mesh-size categories in each management unit and overall. Of the 544 total observed trips, only 14 were conducted by an onboard observer. The remaining 530 were conducted from Marine Patrol vessels.</p> <p>Although onboard observations are the preferred method, only 14 trips included an onboard observer out of a reported 3,099 large mesh and 6,075 small mesh gill net fishing trips.</p> <p>There were also 861 No Contact trips made during the permit year. This refers to a Marine Patrol or Observer vessel that went out on the water looking for anchored gill nets to observe but were unsuccessful. Has anyone calculated the cost of this type of wasted effort? Thinking conservatively, if a boat was out on patrol for four hours, burning 6 gallons of gas per hour, and even using last year's dockside gas prices at \$4.00 per gallon, that quickly adds up to \$82,856 in additional effort to stay within the terms of the ITP because fishermen will not cooperate with observers.</p> <p>Yet, the Protected Resources Program continues to coordinate with NMFS to prepare an application for a Section 10 ITP to be in place when the current Sea Turtle ITP expires in August 2023. The anticipated timeline for submission of the full application is during the 4th quarter of 2022.</p> <p>For the Division to apply for renewal of the ITP is absurd. We simply don't need large mesh to harvest all the Southern flounder the resource can bear. Moreover, the State would benefit if allocation for recreational purposes was increased.</p>
34	Chris	England	North Carolina	<p>We have lived too many years in NC with the philosophy that our resources will last forever. It should be clearly evident to everyone now that is not the case. We as citizens of this great state must find a way to manage our fisheries for the benefit of the resource. Commercial and recreational anglers alike are going to have to make sacrifices if they want the resources to be here for future generations. Recreational anglers must learn that lower creel limits and closed seasons are going to be part of the rebuild that we need. We must get past the old thought that how many fish you put in the cooler is the representation of whether or not you had a good fishing trip. Commercial fishing must stop practices that kill everything regardless of whether it can be sold or not. Gill nets and inshore trawling must be stopped. The bycatch amounts are just</p>

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				<p>too large to let these continue. We must use sustainable commercial fishing practices which allow undersize fish to live and reproduce to sustain the resources. Every industry in our state has been forced to make changes over the years and the commercial fishing industry should be no different.</p>
35	Rick	Sasser	North Carolina	<p>Dear Commissioners-</p> <p>Recently, NC Fisheries Association Executive Director Glenn Skinner posted to his blog the claims below concerning the effects of the 2019 CSMA Gill Net Prohibition at the Ferry Lines:</p> <p>"Three years later, the only quantifiable impact of this net ban has been the negative impact to commercial fishermen and consumers. Amendment 2, to the Striped Bass FMP is the only opportunity, outside of a courtroom, to right this intolerable wrong. It is imperative that everyone voices their opposition to the continuation of this unnecessary net ban! The CCA and likely some of the MFC members who support their agenda wish to see this net ban extended to close the entire Neuse and Pamlico Rivers to the use of all gill nets, with no scientific justification for doing so. If they were to succeed, how long will it be before they attempt to close all inside waters to gillnetting? We strongly urge everyone to demand that the MFC lift these net bans and return to the gill net regulations which were in place prior to the 2019 prohibition. For more information you can reach out to NCFA Executive Director, Glenn Skinner."</p> <p>Current trip ticket data does not support Skinner's statement that the gill net ban at the Ferry Lines has been a negative impact to commercial fishermen and consumers.</p> <p>Reduced landings in the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers are not driven by the ferry line gill net closure. Landings for flounder and drum are down due to the 72% reduction mandated under Southern Flounder Amendment 2. With the associated large mesh gill net restrictions related to the flounder FMP, red drum landings, as a bycatch only fishery, have also dropped.</p> <p>Contrary to Skinner's comments, following the ferry line gill net closure, striped mullet and spotted seatrout landings have significantly increased and are currently 130% to 200% of landings prior to the 2019 gill net closure. It should be noted that the recent striped mullet stock assessment found the fishery to be both overfished with overfishing occurring.</p> <p>This commission should take a holistic approach, eco-system based, within the river systems and further curtail gill net usage in the CSMA. Doing so will help Southern flounder, striped mullet and striped bass recoveries while providing additional protection for red drum as a non-directed bycatch only fishery.</p>

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				<p>Gill net mortality, both directed and non-directed, must be adequately addressed by expanding net free zones in the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers. Directed and non-directed recruitment over-fishing by the commercial fishing sector has led to a truncated age structure preventing the establishment of a spawning stock biomass that can produce dominant year-classes for striped bass. Southern flounder is recruitment overfished with the spawning stock consisting of one to two year classes at best. The recent striped mullet stock assessment also found a severely truncated age structure.</p> <p>The data clearly shows that a more conservative approach is needed. Past management efforts have failed flounder, striped bass and striped mullet. I asked that you adequately address the primary source of total mortality for all three species through a motion and vote closing the Neuse and Tar rivers to all gill net effort at the Tie-Down Line.</p> <p>Sincerely and Best Regards, Rick Sasser [REDACTED]</p>
36	Jim	Blackerby	North Carolina	<p>To the NCMFC, I support continuing the restrictions on gill nets up river of the ferry terminals on the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers.</p>
37	Lonnie	Brown	North Carolina	<p>Since the law has been changed, there has not been any Marine Patrol out at night checking people. There has been recreational fishermen out gigging bringing there limit to the bank and going back out several times. I believe that flounder gigging should be commercial only. That recreation should be hook and line only. Why take away from someone that has put all of their money into a job and then take it away? It's not right to take away a job from someone, so a person can come and just have fun and not follow the rules. I earn 100% of my income comes from flounder gigging. Will be able to start gigging in June 2022. What will be our season. Will there be an another Cares Act to help the fishermen out for this year if you have the season start later? Can a person be grandfathered in to start in June since this is how they make 100% of their living. The flounder giggers have alot against them. They are limited to the weather and the water. Please help out the little guys to help feed their family. Thank you</p>
38	Scot	Bannerman	North Carolina	<p>Please DO NOT remove gill net restrictions on Neuse and Pamlico rivers. These restrictions are having a POSITIVE impact on fishery stock, and those findings are backed by scientific data.</p> <p>Thank you</p>

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39	Taylor	Ellis	North Carolina	As a lifelong resident of Eastern North Carolina, I have fished the Neuse and Pamlico rivers since I was a child. The impact of the 2019 gill net ban has been tremendous. I have seen a significant increase in the numbers and sizes of several fish species. Please do not lift this ban. The gill net ban is doing nothing but helping our fisheries. Thank you!
40	Karen	Lebing	North Carolina	I just want to express my opinion that NC should retain the restrictions on gill net fishing in the Neuse and Pamlico rivers. There should be no gill net fishing there.
41	Jack	Durham	North Carolina	I support lifting the ban on gill nets above the Ferry lines in the Neuse River and the Pamlico River.
42	Stephen	Gurganus	North Carolina	I urge the Commission in the strongest possible way to retain the gill net ban for the upper Neuse and Pamlico Rivers. Please *reject* Amendment 2!
43	Jim	Hardin	North Carolina	<p>Large Mesh Gill Nets</p> <p>Please do not allow gill nets above the ferries on the Neuse and Pamlico rivers. A 2018 study of gill net interactions with striped bass by NCWRC clearly showed that these nets had a significant impact on SB mortality. The current gill net restrictions should remain in effect along with the recreational and commercial harvest moratorium.</p> <p>There is no justifiable reason to allow these nets above the ferry lines when one considers the stock status of Flounder, Striped Bass, and American Shad</p> <p>Flounder</p> <p>After 20+ years of overfishing by the commercial industry the stock is in terrible shape. Consumers will not be affected by the removal of large mesh gill nets. The commercial by-catch and resulting dead discards are not being accounted for and this should be changed immediately.</p> <p>I would like the MFC to require a better data collection mechanism for the recreational flounder catch. MRIP is clearly not the best tool for quota management.</p> <p>The three different species of flounder should be managed independently of one another. If an angler can identify all the different species of groupers, why can they not identify the different flounder species?</p>
44	Rip	Woodin	North Carolina	<p>In the MFC's upcoming deliberation on Amendment 2 of the striped bass FMP, I urge the board to keep the gill net ban above the ferry lines on the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers. The Rachel and Ricks study for the Wildlife Resources Commission in 2018 showed that gill nets and dwindling striped bass numbers only result in more mortality where every fish is needed to help rebuild the stock.</p> <p>Fishing this year anecdotally had more fish in the water than in the past; I'm sure it was due to saving those surprise year classes that showed up in 2019 from gill netting. I would favor a total harvest ban on striped bass in all state rivers until the DMF can conduct a stock assessment that would show whether the population of fish is still falling, recovering or no longer in danger.</p>


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				Thank you.
45	James	Blackerby Sr.	North Carolina	Pease continue the restrictions on gill nets In our rivers.
46	Leonard	Rosol	North Carolina	Dear Marine Fisheries - Please consider the average recreational fisherman with these new rules. I can not see any way that makes sense allowing 90% of our flounder catch to go to the commercial fishermen using destructive and indiscriminate killing devices like gill nets. Do the job you are supposed to do... manage the resources of the state of NC for the PEOPLE of the state, not just a few hundred commercial fishermen who are using gear banned from all neighboring states for being too destructive. Gill nets must be banned, shrimping banned in our sounds, and retire any commercial license that doesn't report at least \$1k in sales every year. Prove that you care.
47	Nicholas	Spivey	North Carolina	Please do not lift the prohibition against gill nets in the Upper Neuse and Pamlico Rivers. While the NCFA purports that the prohibition was without scientific justification, that's absolutely false as it was based upon a study published by in 2018 by the NCWRC. Further, these waters need to be managed for the benefit of all NC citizens not just the commercial industry. The woeful mismanagement of this resource has seen the collapse of multiple fish stocks. This will not improve as long as nets and trawling are allowed in our sounds. This would not just benefit the recreational fisherman but the commercial one too if stocks were allowed to rebound. There are numerous examples around the country where commercial fishing thrives in concert with, not in opposition to, sound management practices. Unfortunately, NC is not one of them.
48	Charles	Forrest	North Carolina	This demands the removal of gill nets from NC estuaries to allow replenishment of edible species including striped bass, flounder speckle trout drum. I once considered retiring to the east coast, but the fishing is so poor or limited, I haven't even visited in two years.
49	Richard	Bucksar	North Carolina	Dear Sir/Madam. I have been fishing South Core Bank and the NC coast since the late 70's. My last four trips with the wife, at a cost of > \$4000.00, have netted zero dinner fish. It ain't me. The commercial fishing interests are out of control. Do something. Please!
50	Robert	Blackerby	North Carolina	I continue to support the gill net ban above the Pamlico and Neuse rivers' ferry lines.
51	CA	Pittman	North Carolina	It is high time to end all inshore gill netting in North Carolina at the very least until stressed fish stocks can rebuild. Re: - gill nets above the ferry lines - NO. No to gill netting for stripe bass. End inshore trawling in internal waters. These internal trawls destroy so many juvenile fish before they ever have a chance to spawn. It is time to end this NOW. Commercial fishermen will deny until the last fish is caught they had anything to do with the demise of a

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				<p>species.</p> <p>It is time to put the resource FIRST, not profits of a small user group.</p> <p>As for flounder - how can you continue to allow commercial harvest on a species deemed by your own data that is overfished, and where overfishing is continuing to occur?</p> <p>All other Gulf Coast and east coast states have ended or drastically reduced inshore netting, and all STILL have commercial fishing. And each of those states have a vastly better inshore fishery than NC. It is time to END inshore netting until stocks can recover.</p> <p>Commercial license holders who continue to report NO Trip Tickets should have their licenses revoked ASAP.</p> <p>There needs to be a more conservative approach to our failed fisheries management in NC until affected fish stocks can recover. If the stocks do not recover, then commercial fishermen will have no choice but to move to another line of work. If stocks recover, then great for all NC residents. No one wants to see commercial fishermen out of business or work. However if the trajectory of NC finfish stocks do not improve, there will be none left for recreational OR commercial fishermen to enjoy. This may be one of the last chances to make meaningful fisheries management reforms before total species collapses. and or the Feds have to get involved because NCDMF has utterly failed all citizens of NC.</p> <p>I urge you to act now and take a more conservative approach to commercial fisheries harvest TAL. Thank you for reading if you made it this far.</p>
52	JASON	RUPERT	North Carolina	<p>North Carolina is the last state on the east coast to allow gill nets in any large capacity, and the only state to allow them in estuarine waters. Historical harvest rates are a clear indication of the decades of damage gill nets have had on our fisheries.</p> <p>We can all agree that the current laws in place are not sustainable. Our current course leads us on a path to the decimation of the fish both commercial and recreational fisherman alike rely on. If we want a chance for our next generation to experience the greatness of the Carolina coast, we must make a change when it comes to the use of netting, specifically in our estuaries.</p>
53	Allen	Matthews	North Carolina	<p>I strongly support the gill net ban that is currently in place. Based on the 2018 NCWRC study by Rachels and Ricks, the ban should be improving our stock. Until this study can be confirmed, no reason at all to remove the current ban.</p>

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54	Richard	Dana	North Carolina	I have watched fish stocks decline for over 60 years because the people in your position have not done what needed to be done. I have little hope that will change any time soon until enough honorable people are in charge of the resource will stand up to the people who are causing the problem. If you folks are honorable, do what is right for the fish.
55	Willing	Plyler	North Carolina	Commercial fishing helps the fisherman and fish house. Recreational flounder fishing brings in thousands of tourists and locals. Paying for license fees, hotels , taxes etc. Nets should never be allowed inshore.
56	Rudy	Heller	North Carolina	<p>I am providing comment on the subject of whether or not gill netting should be allowed in the upper portions of the Neuse and Pamlico rivers above the ferry line.</p> <p>You must absolutely prohibit the use of gill nets in these areas. No matter what anybody says or argues, gill nets are INDISCRIMINATE and result in the death of many non-targeted fish, juvenile fish, and bycatch. If allowed, gill netting will result in a significant increase in fish mortality, not just striped bass, but any other species that happens to get caught in those nets.</p> <p>Fish stocks in general continue to be under tremendous pressure which has resulted in very strict take limits. The reason these limitations are in place is because fish are threatened. Instead of threatening the stocks more by allowing additional gill netting, we should be doing more to assist those species with recovery to a sustainable status.</p> <p>YOU are the ones who make the laws. Only YOU can make the important decisions to help keep fish populations healthy for both current and future generations. It is not just the taking of fish that endanger populations, we have water quality issues, habitat destruction issues, challenging weather issues, and other environmental issues that also wreak havoc on fish sustainability. We need to be doing everything in our control to help offset other factors we might not be able to control. Limiting gill netting is one of those actions in your control.</p> <p>Please, please, please vote to KEEP THE GILL NETS OUT OF OUR RIVERS. Thank you. Rudy</p>
57	Matt	Chytka	North Carolina	I protest any action to lift bans or restrictions on gill nets. Refer to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission study published by Kyle Rachels and Ben Ricks in 2018 that showed gill net interactions were a significant factor on the cryptic mortality of striped bass in these areas. The gill net restrictions in the CSMA were put into place, along with a harvest moratorium on recreational and commercial fishermen, to help recover a depleted striped bass population. They should remain in place until a study has been conducted to determine if the stock is indeed recovering and what impact the removal of nets is having on fish stocks in these rivers. If the nets go back in, then angler access to these fish, that they pay to stock, should also be restored. I am

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				deeply concerned about the current condition of our flounder species populations, gill netting again has decimated our flounder stocks to the point that I have not caught a decent keeper flounder inshore in years. This is pathetic, protect our future fishermen and women's rights to decent fishing by enacting and enforcing adequate protections now.
58	Robert	Powell	North Carolina	Continue the gillnet restrictions on the Neuse. They are helping.
59	Edward	Hendricks	North Carolina	Extend the gill net ban in the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers until a study has been conducted to determine if the stock is indeed recovering and what impact the removal of nets is having on fish stocks in these rivers.
60	Paul	Graham	North Carolina	<p>I know that you and the committee are meeting to determine the flounder season and daily bag limits for recreational fishermen soon. I am concerned that it is possible proposal of season window from Aug. 16 - Sept. 30 in which one flounder per person, per day can be harvested until the 160,000 lb quota is reached. Minimum length remains at 15". This proposal would have a bad impact on the Outer Banks economy as many recreational fishermen will not go fishing for flounder with only 1 keeper/day or will switch to fishing for Red Drum, speckled trout, etc. which will impact that species of fish. I wish that the flounder keeper limit would at least be increased to 2/day and the season extended. You have already allowed the commercial to harvest of ocean flounder this summer while all recreational fishing for flounder is closed for the summer?</p> <p>It is my opinion that the flounder is being overfished is due to the Commercial Industry and the Shrimp Trawlers. It is a known fact that the pound nets capture thousands of pounds of flounder in each net each week with some mortality bycatch of smaller flounder.</p> <p>Also the gill nets are a source of fishing mortality-bycatch which greatly impede or prevent recovery. While the harvest of ocean flounder species remains closed to recreational anglers, commercial harvest of ocean flounder continues, including an almost 3.4-million-pound quota for summer flounder landed in NC. Shrimp trawlers with their mortality bycatch for juvenile species, including spot, croaker, weakfish, southern and summer flounder are also preventing the recovery of flounder. If the shrimp trawlers were not allowed to work the sound area during the summer (May – October), the flounder stock and other species would probably recover at a quicker pace.</p> <p>It has been stated that historically that the commercial industry was responsible for 80% of the harvest which means that the recreational fisherman is responsible for 20%. That is why I am confused that your commission determines that the recreational fisherman is to be unjustly penalized with a short season and a 1 fish/day limit.</p> <p>I had the pleasure to go fishing for flounder for 2 weekends of the last year shorten fishing season. With 4</p>

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				<p>fishermen drifting for Flounder, we averaged a boat catch of 5 flounder per day which is way below the boat bag limit of 16 per day. It is difficult to understand how the recreational fisherman is depleting the stock when we cannot even catch a daily bag limit. If the allocation was changed to a 2 keepers/day, the recreational fishing might be increased which would also help the local economy. With more weeks of flounder fishing, many more recreational fishermen would visit the area more which increases the lodging, marina sales, restaurant sales, grocery sales, merchandise sales, etc.</p> <p>I have been going to the Outer Banks for over 30 years fishing at least 2 weekends mainly for flounder as we drift fish by boat with 4 anglers on the boat. 30 years ago, we very seldom met the catch limits on a daily basis with size limit smaller and the bag limit higher. In the past 10 years with the size limit larger and bag limit smaller, we never get close to our daily quota drift fishing for flounder. I have even went flounder giggering a few times in the last 5 years and we don't even meet our bag limit after giggering for several hours. Please consider all of these factors when your committee are deciding the percentage of recreational fisherman/commercial industry allocation.</p> <p>You are welcome to contact me to discuss this matter.</p>
61	Michael	Brady	North Carolina	<p>Ladies/Gentlemen</p> <p>I was born in Jacksonville, NC in 1960. Throughout my years, while fishing with my Dad and others, I have witnessed the beauty of our marine resources and the destruction of these resources at the hands of gill netting and trawling.</p> <p>Times have changed and we must prohibit all gill netting and trawling within our state waters. Scientific and objective data continuously demonstrates the horrendous negative impact that gill netting and trawling produce.</p> <p>In NC we trail other states in the protection of our marine resources. These creatures are not endless in their ability to sustain themselves. We must do our part and make gill netting permanently prohibited.</p> <p>The data shows that this is necessary for a viable and sustainable harvest.</p> <p>Commercial interests are deaf to the destruction they produce and the over-harvest they are responsible for.</p> <p>Hook and line is available to all groups, commercial and recreational. There is no legitimate reason that commercial fisherman can't adopt recreational fishing methods and reduce by-catch deaths.</p> <p>Maintain the prohibition of gill netting currently in place for stripers and extend it to ALL state waters with permanent status.</p>

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				<p>The time for gill netting prohibition is NOW. Make it permanent and make it throughout NC state waters.</p> <p>Respectfully,</p> <p>Michael E. Brady </p>
62	Chris	Brown	North Carolina	<p>Please extend the gill net ban on the Neuse River and Pamlico River above the ferry lines until current scientific studies are completed that show whether or not the ban has been beneficial.</p>
63	Ed	Mondello	North Carolina	<p>I and my family strongly agree with the CCA of North Carolina . Every effort should be used to protect our fisheries. It's appalling that our state is the only left that allows inshore netting of any type both commercially and recreational. I have personally experienced dramatic recovery of multiple species both in Florida where I lived in the Past and Massachusetts.</p> <p>This is unacceptable that netting is still allowed and practiced . Please open your eyes and right this wrong!!!</p> <p>Whoever doesn't see this is blind or being paid off. All the data supports banning inshore nets of any type, I have personally fished a creek for a week or 2 only to observe a nettier set up at dusk and block off the entire creek indiscriminately kill every species at sunup. Destroying a fishing spot that many recreational fishermen had success in. It's common knowledge that</p>
64	WILL	BROWN	North Carolina	<p>I support upholding the gill net ban in the upper Neuse and Pamlico Rivers. This ban has positively impacted the Striped Bass stock and will continue to do so if kept in place. The Striped Bass stock is an important resource for our state and should be protected. I urge the commission to keep the ban and encourage further study into its effects.</p>