

# Chairman's Report

May 2023 Business Meeting

**01** Letters

---

**03** State Ethics Education Reminder

---

**04** 2023 Annual Meeting Calendar

---

**05** 2022 Committee Assignments

---

**07** Committee Reports

---

**From:** Serena Parsons [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2023 12:25 AM  
**To:** Bizzell, Rob <[r.bizzell.mfc@ncdenr.gov](mailto:r.bizzell.mfc@ncdenr.gov)>  
**Subject:** [External]

---

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify. Send all suspicious email as an attachment to [Report Spam](#).

Hello my name is Cody Atkinson I am in the Duplin County NC area and have fished coastal and inland waters all of my life. I'm looking to find out about this BS "CATCH AND QUIT" fishery that Doug Cross is looking to pass for Speckled trout. I don't understand how that can even be a debate people buy licenses, registration, etc. How can the people be told NOT to fish? We're law abiding citizens trying to enjoy some freedoms we still have, Sounds like Doug Cross the "Commercial fisherman" is trying to push the recreational fisherman out for good. I do not keep fish I'm 100% catch and release I do not understand how this can happen and would like more information. Hello my name is Cody Atkinson I am in the Duplin County NC area and have fished coastal and inland waters all of my life. I'm looking to find out about this BS "CATCH AND QUIT" fishery that Doug Cross is looking to pass for Speckled trout. I don't understand how that can even be a debate people buy licenses, registration, etc. How can the people be told NOT to fish? We're law abiding citizens trying to enjoy some freedoms we still have, Sounds like Doug Cross the "Commercial fisherman" is trying to push the recreational fisherman out for good. I do not keep fish I'm 100% catch and release I do not understand how this can happen and would like more information.

---

**From:** Wood Farless [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 27, 2023 6:59 AM  
**To:** Bizzell, Rob <[r.bizzell.mfc@ncdenr.gov](mailto:r.bizzell.mfc@ncdenr.gov)>  
**Subject:** [External] South Carolina Spotted Seatrout Regulations

CAUTION: External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify. Send all suspicious email as an attachment to Report Spam.<<mailto:report.spam@nc.gov>>

---

Rob please check out the regulations South Carolina has put in place and how well their speckled trout numbers are doing since the specs can not be targeted by commercial fishermen with nets. There are plenty of other species of seafood that the non fishing consumers can purchase. It seems this issue has become very political and which side throws the most money at certain commissioners will win the battle.  
Wood Farless

Sent from my iPhone



## EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

Public Servants must complete the Ethics and Lobbying Education program provided by the N.C. State Ethics Commission within **six months** of their election, appointment, or employment. We recommend that this be completed as soon as possible, but the training must be repeated every two years after the initial session.

Since Adobe Flash was terminated on December 31, 2020, our online program is not available. A new and shorter online program will be available in the near future. The new program will be compatible with portable devices such as phones and tablets.

Live webinar presentations are being offered monthly and registration information for the live presentations can be found [here](#). These presentations are about 90 minutes long and give you the opportunity to ask questions of the speaker.

For questions or additional information concerning the Ethics Education requirements, please contact Dottie Benz at (919) 389-1383.

# Marine Fisheries Commission 2023 Annual Calendar

*\*Dates are subject to change.\**

January						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1		3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15		17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

February						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

March						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

April						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6		8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

May						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28		30	31			

June						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

July						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3		5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

August						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

September						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3		5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

October						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

November						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9		11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22			25
26	27	28	29	30		

December						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24				28	29	30
31						

## 2023 MFC Meeting Dates

### MFC Business Meetings

February 22-24  
May 24-26  
August 23-25  
November 15-17

### Northern Regional AC

January 10  
April 11  
July 11  
October 10

### Southern Regional AC

January 11  
April 12  
July 12  
October 11

### Finfish Standing AC

January 12  
April 13  
July 13  
October 12

### Shellfish/Crustacean Standing AC

January 17  
April 18  
July 18  
October 19

### Habitat and Water Quality Standing AC

January 18  
April 19  
July 19  
October 18

## Calendar Key

	MFC		Northern Regional AC
	ASMFC		Southern Regional AC
	SAFMC		Finfish Standing AC
	MAFMC		Habitat and Water Quality Standing AC
	State Holiday		Shellfish/Crustacean Standing AC

# 2022 Committee Assignments for Marine Fisheries Commissioners

09/1/2022

---

## **FINFISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

*Statutorily required standing committee comprised of commissioners and advisers that considers matters related to finfish.*

**Commissioners:** Tom Roller – co-chair, Sarah Gardner – co-chair, Mike Blanton – vice chair

**DMF Staff Lead:** Lee Paramore - [lee.paramore@ncdenr.gov](mailto:lee.paramore@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Can meet quarterly, depending on assignments from MFC

## **HABITAT AND WATER QUALITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE & COASTAL HABITAT PROTECTION PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**

*Statutorily required standing committee comprised of commissioners and advisers that considers matters concerning habitat and water quality that may affect coastal fisheries resources.*

**Commissioners:** Doug Rader – chair, Ana Shellem– vice chair

**DMF Staff Lead:** Anne Deaton - [anne.deaton@ncdenr.gov](mailto:anne.deaton@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Committee can meet quarterly, depending on assignments from MFC. CHPP Steering Committee can meet a couple of times a year.

## **SHELLFISH/CRUSTACEAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

*Statutorily required standing committee comprised of commissioners and advisers that considers matters concerning oysters, clams, scallops and other molluscan shellfish, shrimp and crabs.*

**Commissioners:** Ana Shellem – co-chair, Mike Blanton – co-chair, Doug Cross – vice chair

**DMF Staff Lead:** Tina Moore - [tina.moore@ncdenr.gov](mailto:tina.moore@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Can meet quarterly, depending on assignments from MFC

## **CONSERVATION FUND COMMITTEE**

*Committee comprised of commissioners that makes recommendations to the MFC for administering funds to be used for marine and estuarine resources management, including education about the importance of conservation.*

**Commissioners:** Doug Rader - chair, and Robert McNeill

**DMF Staff Lead:** Steve Poland – [steve.poland@ncdenr.gov](mailto:steve.poland@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Meets as needed

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CIVIL PENALTY COMMITTEE**

*Statutorily required committee comprised of commissioners that makes final agency decisions on civil penalty remission requests.*

**Commissioners:** Rob Bizzell - chair, Doug Cross

**DMF Staff Lead:** Col. Carter Witten – [carter.witten@ncdenr.gov](mailto:carter.witten@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Meets as needed

## **COASTAL RECREATIONAL FISHING LICENSE TRUST COMMITTEE**

*Committee consisting of the three recreational seats and the science seat to provide the DMF advice on the projects and grants issued using Coastal Recreational Fishing License trust funds.*

**Commissioners:** Robert McNeill– chair, Rob Bizzell, Tom Roller, and Doug Rader

**DMF Staff Lead:** Jamie Botinovch - [jamie.botinovch@ncdenr.gov](mailto:jamie.botinovch@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Meets as needed

## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

*Committee comprised of commissioners that makes recommendations to the MFC on at-large and obligatory nominees for the Mid- and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils.*

**Commissioners:** Robert McNeill – chair, Ana Shellem, Tom Roller and Mike Blanton

**DMF Staff Lead:** Chris Batsavage - [chris.batsavage@ncdenr.gov](mailto:chris.batsavage@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Typically meets once a year

## **STANDARD COMMERCIAL FISHING LICENSE ELIGIBILITY BOARD**

*Statutorily required three-person board consisting of DEQ, DMF and MFC designees who apply eligibility criteria to determine whether an applicant is eligible for a SCFL.*

**Commission Designee:** Mike Blanton

**DMF Staff Lead:** Marine Patrol Capt. Garland Yopp – [garland.yopp@ncdenr.gov](mailto:garland.yopp@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Meets two to three times a year, could need to meet more often depending on volume of applications

## **N.C. COMMERCIAL FISHING RESOURCE FUND COMMITTEE**

*Committee comprised of commissioners that the commission has given authority to make funding decisions on projects to develop and support sustainable commercial fishing in the state.*

**Commissioners:** Doug Cross – chair, Mike Blanton, Ana Shellem

**DMF Staff Lead:** William Brantley – [william.brantley@ncdenr.gov](mailto:william.brantley@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Meets two to three times a year

## **WRC/MFC JOINT COMMITTEE ON DELINEATION OF FISHING WATERS**

*Committee formed to help integrate the work of the two commissions as they fulfill their statutory responsibilities to jointly determine the boundaries that define North Carolina's Inland, Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters as the agencies go through a statutorily defined periodic review of existing rules.*

**MFC Commissioners:** Rob Bizzell, Donald Huggins, Sarah Gardner

**DMF Staff Lead:** Anne Deaton - [anne.deaton@ncdenr.gov](mailto:anne.deaton@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Meets as needed

## **SHELLFISH CULTIVATION LEASE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

*Three-member committee formed to hear appeals of decisions of the Secretary regarding shellfish cultivation leases issued under G.S. 113-202.*

**MFC Commissioners:** Rob Bizzell

**DMF Staff Lead:** Jacob Boyd – [jacob.boyd@ncdenr.gov](mailto:jacob.boyd@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Meets as needed

## **COASTAL HABITAT PROTECTION PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**

*The CHPP Steering Committee, which consists of two commissioners from the Marine Fisheries, Coastal Management and Environmental Management commissions reviews and approves the plan, recommendations, and implementation actions.*

**MFC Commissioners:** Doug Rader, Donald Huggins

**DMF Staff Lead:** Anne Deaton – [anne.deaton@ncdenr.gov](mailto:anne.deaton@ncdenr.gov)

**Meeting Frequency:** Meets as needed



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

ELIZABETH S. BISER  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

May 5, 2023

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Marine Fisheries Commission  
Northern Region Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Charlton Godwin, Biologist Supervisor  
Lee Paramore, Northern District Manager  
Fisheries Management Section

**SUBJECT:** Meeting of the Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Region Advisory Committee

---

The Marine Fisheries Commission's (MFC) Northern Region Advisory Committee (AC) held a hybrid meeting on Apr. 11, 2023, at the North Carolina Estuarium in Washington. The meeting was also live streamed on YouTube. Advisory Committee members could attend in person or on WebEx and could communicate with other committee members.

The following Advisory Committee members were in attendance in person: Sara Winslow, Carl Hacker, Jon Worthington, Keith Bruno; the following attended via WebEx: Everette Blake, Thomas Newman, Carl Hacker, Jamie Lane, Roger Rulifson, Dale Martin (arrived late). Absent: Melissa Clark

Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Staff: Kathy Rawls, Carter Witten, Candace Rose, Lara Klibansky, Debbie Manley, Charlton Godwin, Lee Paramore, Corrin Flora, Dan Zapf, Lucas Pensinger, Jason Rock

Public: Three members of the public attended in person and 25 viewers watched on YouTube. No members of the public provided public comment.

The Northern Region AC had nine members in attendance and a quorum was met.

Northern Region AC Chair Sara Winslow called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF JAN. 2023 MEETING MINUTES**

**A motion was made by Jonathan Worthington to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting. Second by Keith Bruno. The motion passed 9-0.**

**A motion was made by Jonathan Worthington to approve the minutes from the Northern Region AC meeting held on January 10, 2023. Second by Herman Dunbar. The motion passed by unanimous consent.**

**MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION UPDATE**

Lara Klibansky provided an update on the February 2023 MFC business meeting.



### False Albacore (Common name: little tunny *Euthynnus alletteratus*)

In February, the Commission reviewed a False Albacore Information Paper the Division had prepared at their request. This was an update to a 2017 paper that was a general review of information about the false albacore fishery in North Carolina. Following quite a bit of discussion on the information in that paper, the Commission ultimately did pass a motion; asking staff to develop rulemaking language with management options for false albacore starting with the status quo and allowing for growth in the fishery at various percentage points. Staff are reviewing available data to define some of those terms, for example what is "status quo". The Division will be presenting its initial analysis at the Commission's May 2023 business meeting. The final issue paper, with rule language options, is anticipated for either the August or November commission meeting.

### Spotted Seatrout

In February, the staff leads presented an overview of the spotted seatrout fishery to the MFC and received input from commissioners on items for consideration in fishery management plan (FMP) development. Just as a reminder, we just completed the scoping period for spotted seatrout. So, we are at the very beginning of the FMP development process. Staff are now going to take the feedback they received during the scoping meetings, from the February MFC business meeting and will begin to develop the draft plan. Lara noted that the Northern AC members also have the opportunity to provide feedback tonight if there are management strategies they'd like staff to consider as they begin the first draft that management plan. Lara acknowledged the feedback provided by Commissioner Cross was a bit more comprehensive than we generally see at this point and we do have space on the agenda to discuss it all with the leads, and it will indeed be discussed more thoroughly at future meetings but staff can provide the AC the input that was received from Commissioner Cross. Public input is a huge part of fisheries management here in North Carolina.

### Striped Mullet

In November of 2022, the commission selected their preferred management option for Supplement A to the Striped Mullet FMP, and that was for a state-wide November 7–December 31 season closure which is estimated to result in a 22.1% reduction in harvest compared to the last year of data used in the assessment, which is 2019. In February, the Commission heard the outcome of the public comment period and based on that input they requested the division consider developing regionally specific seasons. Staff are currently working on that. Staff reminded the AC, a supplement is meant to address overfishing immediately, utilizing a simple approach (e.g. a seasonal harvest closure, or area closure), while more comprehensive management will be developed in an amendment that is currently under development. So in May the Commission will be continuing their discussion of the management options provided in Supplement A.

### Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP)

Relating to the CHPP, the Commission unanimously approved a motion supporting the Coastal Habitat Initiative Resolution which came from the Stakeholder Engagement for Collaborative Coastal Habitats Initiative (SECCHI). This resolution was focused on encouraging the State to increase funding for voluntary cost share programs to help improve water quality. As a reminder, DMF and the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership worked collaboratively with a core team of non-governmental organizations to form a public-private partnership which is the Stakeholder Engagement for Collaborative Coastal Habitats Initiative (SECCHI) which was a recommendation from the 2021 CHPP Amendment. The resolution was also supported by the Coastal Resources Commission (CRC) and the Environmental Management Commission (EMC) at their recent meetings.

### May MFC Meeting

The May Commission meeting is scheduled for May 24–26 at the Beaufort Hotel in Beaufort. Lara noted that in addition to the update she just provided tonight on striped mullet, spotted seatrout and false

albacore, which are all on the May agenda, if the AC members would like to see a more complete overview of what is expected to be on the agenda in May, Lara encouraged them to review the MFC Workplan. That is updated for each MFC business meeting and is included as part of the briefing materials for each meeting. February's workplan is the most up to date version available.

Staff finished the update and the Chair opened the floor for questions from the AC. The AC asked if false albacore management was going to be addressed by any plans from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. DMF staff noted it is going to come up at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). AC member Thomas Newman noted the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council chose not to manage little tunny at this time but would look at trends in harvest and catch data every three years. In recent years little tunny has become a fish that is targeted by the recreational sector due to its great fighting ability when hooked. It is rarely eaten in the U.S. The AC asked if our state chose to manage little tunny would we have to get together an AC and develop an FMP or how would that work? DMF noted the MFC has asked us to develop some options that would be more like guardrails, to allow for some expansion in utilization of the stock within pre-determined limits, but not really an FMP at this time. DMF staff noted at the state-level any regulations would need to go through the full rulemaking process before anything can be put in place. If ASMFC includes little tunny in a coastwide FMP and required management, we could use North Carolina's Interjurisdictional FMP as a way to implement regulations, otherwise any rules at the state-level will need to go through the rule making process. The AC asked if all three commissions (MFC, CRC, and EMC) were working together to implement the CHPP? DMF staff noted yes and each agency is needed to carry out any action from the CHPP that falls under their respective authority.

#### **SPOTTED SEATROUT FMP SCOPING UPDATE**

Lucas Pensinger and Jason Rock gave a brief overview of comments received during the March 13–24 spotted seatrout scoping period. Overall, there was a lot of participation with over 700 people providing comments online or in person. Comments ranging from strongly “for” and “against” and everything in between. Regarding sustainable harvest, comments ranged from no quota/quota, seasonal closures, bag limit reduction, trip limit reduction, and increase in minimum size. For recreational management there was support for making spotted seatrout a game fish, outreach for catch and release best practices, ending the use of recreational commercial gear licenses, boat limits, eliminating captain and crew limits, and limited entry. General recreational comments included reducing the impact of catch and release tournaments, and gear requirements. Commercial comments included making it entirely a hook and line fishery with limited entry. General commercial comments included gill net limits, closing the personal consumption loophole, area limits, subsidizes to phase out gill nets, increased gill net mesh size, gill net attendance regardless of area or time, and limited entry. Regarding protecting spawning stock biomass, comments included bag limit reductions, increase minimum size, and modifying cold stun protocols. Area management came up quite a lot during the scoping period and included closing certain areas to gill nets and/or all spotted seatrout fishing, and regional management. Commissioner Cross's strategy was also discussed at the scoping meetings and the public was overwhelming against quota allocation. Overall, there was general opposition to a quota and ending catch and release fishing. Multispecies management, stocking, increasing enforcement, considering management in other states, and developing a recreational reporting app (mandatory and optional reporting) were also brought up.

Staff finished the verbal update and the Chair opened the floor for questions from the AC. An AC member asked and suggested we investigate using CRFL funds through a University to conduct research on the catch-and-release delayed mortality rate for spotted seatrout. There was some question as to the accuracy of the 10% delayed mortality rate assigned to spotted seatrout recreational releases. DMF staff pointed out the studies conducted by the Division used methods that are in line with other peer reviewed studies and values used by other states, even though the Division studies were not published in a peer reviewed paper. Staff also reminded the AC the study that was cited for the mortality rate used in the

spotted seatrout stock assessment was peer reviewed, and the results were in line with many other peer reviewed literature on hook-and-release delayed mortality. Staff pointed out there is a table in the stock assessment (Table 1.8) that is a summary of recreational fishery delayed release mortality estimates from a review of the literature. Mortality estimates range from 4.6%–55.6%. An AC member pointed out 10% was comparatively low relative to the other studies referenced in the stock assessment. The AC asked about the potential to reduce discard mortality by restricting the hook type used, e.g. limiting anglers to single barbless hooks, etc. Staff pointed out that while that may decrease mortality, there would be no way to calculate the exact reduction in mortality because we would need to know the current angler use by all the possible hook types, which we do not know that information. There was then some discussion from AC members about various options for a closed recreational season by waterbody jurisdictions, such as closing inland fishing waters during winter months. Another suggestion was to close recreational harvest in joint waters during the week when commercial harvest was open and allow recreational harvest on the weekends when commercial harvest was closed. Discussion among AC members then moved to the commercial daily trip limit. It was noted the reason you don't see all commercial trips landing exactly 75 fish is that once they get close to the limit, e.g. if a fishermen makes a set and gets 50–60 fish, they are not going to make another set to try and get just a few more fish knowing they would likely have to throw back many more just to get to the 75 daily allowable limit. Commercial fishermen don't want to catch what they can't keep and have to throw fish back.

AC members asked about the timeline. Staff responded that at the May 2023 MFC meeting they would review the information obtained during the Scoping process and approve the Goals and Objectives for the FMP. After that staff would work on developing a first draft of the plan with numerous options. The MFC would appoint an FMP AC to work with the division to revise that first draft and fully develop the issue papers. If all things go as scheduled the FMP AC would start meeting with division staff in the fall of 2023.

### **ESTUARINE STRIPED BASS SEASON UPDATE**

Division staff updated the AC on landings to date for striped bass in the Albemarle Sound Management Area. The commercial sector landed 20,460 pounds of their 25,608 lb total allowable landings (TAL) and was open March 3–March 17. The recreational sector landed 9,511 pounds of their 12,804 lb TAL and was open January 1–March 12. Staff informed the AC the WRC harvest season in the Roanoke River was going to be April 14–17 and April 22–23. There were no questions from the AC.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment occurred.

### **PLAN AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Lara Klibansky provided one additional update about wind energy. Trish Murphey will provide an update to the AC at a future meeting.

Lastly staff discussed the July Joint MFC AC Workshop. We have decided to schedule the meeting on Monday July 10<sup>th</sup> based on questionnaire results. Over 50% of those who responded to the survey preferred this date. The meeting will take place at the N.C. Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores. Staff recognizes this will require quite a bit of travel for many of you and one reason that we chose the aquarium is because we are able to use the space at a reduced cost allowing us to portion more funds for travel and hotels. The aquarium is also a beautiful venue which we feel will help the tone of the meeting. The overall goal of this workshop is to bring members from all five ACs (Northern and Southern Regional ACs, and Finfish, Habitat and Water Quality, and Shellfish/Crustacean Standing ACs) together for open discussion and to hear from DMF staff and others about key topics of interest. For example, we've had a number of requests from different advisors for overviews on stock assessments, the FMP

process, etc. We hope it will be an opportunity for networking, discussion, and collaborative learning. We are still in the planning stages and will update all advisors as those plans solidify.

**ISSUES FROM AC MEMBERS**

There were no issues from AC Members.

**APPROVAL TO ADJOURN**

**A motion was made at 7:06 by Jonathan Worthington to adjourn the meeting. Second by Herman Dunbar. The motion passed by unanimous consent.**



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

ELIZABETH S. BISER  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

April 28, 2023

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Marine Fisheries Commission  
Southern Regional Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Chris Stewart, Biologist Supervisor  
Tina Moore, Southern District Manager  
Fisheries Management Section

**SUBJECT:** Meeting of the Marine Fisheries Commission's Southern Regional Advisory Committee,  
Apr. 12, 2023 for updates.

---

The Marine Fisheries Commission's (MFC) Southern Regional Advisory Committee (AC) held a meeting on Apr. 12, 2023, at the Division of Marine Fisheries Central District Office, Morehead City, North Carolina and via webinar. Advisory Committee members could attend in either setting and communicate with other committee members.

The following Advisory Committee members were in attendance: Fred Scharf, Samuel Boyce, Jason Fowler, Tom Smith (came online at 6:10 pm), Pam Morris, Jerry James, Kenneth Siegler, Michael Yates (Absent – Scott (Jeff) Harrell, Truby Proctor, Tim Wilson).

Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Staff: Chris Stewart, Paula Farnell, Corrin Flora, Hope Wade, Garland Yopp, Ashley Bishop, Jason Rock, Lucas Pensinger, Jessie Bissette

Public: No public were in attendance at the Central District Office. Twenty-five viewers watched on YouTube.

The Southern Regional AC had eight members present at the start of the meeting and a quorum was met.

Southern Regional AC Chair Fred Scharf called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Chair opened the floor for the AC members and DMF staff to provide introductions.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**A motion was made to approve the agenda by Jason Fowler. Second by Pam Morris. The motion passed without objection.**

**A motion was made to approve the minutes from the Southern Regional AC meeting held on Jan. 11, 2023. Motion by Jerry James to approve the minutes. Second by Jason Fowler. The motion passed without objection.**

## MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION UPDATE

Lara Klibansky could not attend, Paula Farnell gave the update. The Feb. MFC business meeting was held in New Bern. A recording of the meeting can be found on the NC Department of Environmental Quality YouTube channel and additional information can be found on the Division's website. The commission reviewed a false albacore information paper specific to North Carolina. This paper was prepared at the commission's request and is an update to the 2017 false albacore information paper. A motion was made to develop state-level rulemaking language with management options starting with status quo and allowing for growth for the fishery at various percentage points. Staff are evaluating data, defining terms (i.e., status quo), and will present the analysis at the MFC's May meeting. A final issue paper with management options will be presented at the Aug. or Nov. 2023 business meetings. At the Northern AC, a question was asked about the South Atlantic Marine Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) stance on false albacore. Currently, there has only been discussion and no action has been taken; however, if management measures are taken through either the SAFMC or ASMFC, NC can implement measures through current proclamation authority. The information paper being developed by staff is specific to NC.

Staff gave the commission an overview of the spotted seatrout fishery. The commission provided input on the development of the FMP and Commissioner Cross gave specific management options for consideration. The scoping period for spotted sea trout recently closed and staff will provide you all an overview later tonight. Public input is a very important part of the FMP process.

The development of the striped mullet supplement and amendment were also discussed at the February MFC meeting. In November, the commission unanimously approved Supplement A to Amendment 1 for striped mullet which includes a Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> – Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> closure to achieve a 22.1% reduction. At the February meeting, the commission was to make its final approval of the supplement; however, after much discussion, no decision was made. Staff are currently working on regional options at the request of the commission to be presented at the May business meeting. Supplement A will only be a temporary measure to address overfishing and will potentially only impact the 2023 season while comprehensive management is developed through Amendment 2, which should be complete prior to the 2024 season.

The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) Amendment was adopted in 2021 and initiated the development of the Stakeholder Engagement for Collaborative Coastal Habitat Initiative (SECCHI). This initiative is meant to develop a public-private partnership to encourage stakeholder engagement. Recently, a coastal habitat resolution was developed and brought before the Marine Fisheries, Environmental Management, and Coastal Resources commission to get additional cost share funding specific to water quality issues such as nutrient loading and run-off. The MFC voted to support this resolution for more funding and get people to participate in these types of programs to improve water quality. The CRC and EMC also chose to support this resolution.

### *Questions from AC members*

Scharf asked the dates of the next MFC meeting. Staff indicated that it is May 24-26 at the Beaufort Hotel. James asked if the division is looking at grants for water quality. Staff will provide more information at the next meeting. James indicated the Attorney General's office has an enhancement grant that closes in May that should be considered. Boyce asked for more information on false albacore and if there is a large commercial component to the fishery. Staff noted that the presentation is on the web. Regarding commercial fishery, most fish are caught incidentally while targeting other species and sold mostly for cut bait. Recreationally, it's mostly a catch and release fishery. Several AC members commented that they typically just throw them back.

Farnell noted that the southern AC will receive a brief update on fish passage in the Cape Fear and will receive a more in-depth presentation at a later date. She further indicated that staff are working on topics for the joint AC July workshop which may include stock assessment and FMP development. The next FMP to be discussed by the Southern AC will be striped mullet later this fall, there will be several other FMPs that will come to the ACs in early 2024. Staff will send an updated workplan that outlines the timeline for each FMP. Bycatch and bycatch reduction keeps coming up as well as how various fishing gears impact habitat and water quality; thus, you all may receive a presentation in future on these topics. Farnell encouraged the members to send any additional topics to staff so we can utilize these meetings when there are no action items. Scharf noted that Director Rawls has made a push to increase communication between the division and the ACs as well as get more input from the ACs on agenda items to be discussed at our quarterly meetings.

## **JULY JOINT MFC ADVISORY COMMITTEES MEETING PLANNING**

Scharf asked if there was a framework or agenda for the July meeting. Farnell indicated that the meeting will be held on Monday July 10<sup>th</sup> at the Pine Knoll Shores Aquarium and will likely be held from 10 am to 3 pm. There will be a virtual option and travel will be covered. The goal is to have presentations on some of the topics discussed earlier (stock assessment, FMP development, bycatch, etc.). There may be one or two outside presentations (water quality, climate change). We want discussion amongst the ACs and staff. The event will be recorded if you can't be there in person or virtual. James asked if it would be open to the public. Farnell indicated it would be on the web to be viewed by the public only. James discussed the need to get more public involvement, particularly from the recreational sector. Several AC members noted that there has been an influx of comments from recreational fishermen on the division's social media pages; however, most of it has been critical. Fowler noted that we need to get more people to provide comments at the meeting in lieu of posting negative comments on social media. Scharf indicated that he liked the idea of the joint meeting being more informal so that members can build working relationships across the ACs. He further noted that it was a great opportunity to get to know other members and develop solutions to common problems faced by the ACs. Farnell agreed that many of the issues overlap, and it is a great way for the AC members to interact.

## **SPOTTED SEATROUT SCOPING PERIOD**

Lucas Pensinger and Jason Rock gave a brief overview of comments received during March 13-24 spotted seatrout scoping period. Overall, there was a lot of participation with over 700 people providing comments online or in person. Comments ranging from strongly "for" and "against" and everything in between. Regarding sustainable harvest, comments ranged from no quota/quota, seasonal closures, bag limit reduction, trip limit reduction, and increase in minimum size. For recreational management there was support for making spotted seatrout a game fish, outreach for catch and release best practices, ending the use of recreational commercial gear licenses, boat limits, eliminating captain and crew limits, and limited entry. General recreational comments included reducing the impact of catch and release tournaments, and gear requirements. Commercial comments included making it entirely a hook and line fishery with limited entry. General commercial comments included gill net limits, closing the personal consumption loophole, area limits, subsidies to phase out gill nets, increased gill net mesh size, gill net attendance regardless of area or time, and limited entry. Regarding protecting spawning stock biomass, comments included bag limit reductions, increase minimum size, and modifying cold stun protocols. Area management came up quite a lot during the scoping period and included closing certain areas to gill nets and/or all spotted seatrout fishing, and regional management. Commissioner Cross's strategy was also discussed at the scoping meetings and the public was overwhelming against quota allocation. Overall, there was general opposition to a quota and ending catch and release fishing. Multispecies management, stocking, increasing enforcement, considering management in other states, and developing a recreational reporting app (mandatory and optional reporting) were also brought up.

James asked if there was a lot of support for commercial hook and line. Pensinger noted there were a few people who supported it; however, there were very few comments received from commercial fishermen. Staff are in the process of tallying all the numbers. Morris commented that most fish pass through the large mesh used in the commercial fishery and that most don't catch 75 fish. She further noted that since it's mostly a recreational fishery, there is no real need to put any further restriction on the commercial fishery. Morris asked staff about the benchmark stock assessment, noting that she had major concerns with using the most recent three years to assess the stock. Rock noted that assessment had data up to 2019 and the peer reviewers recommended using the average from 2017-2019 to base management off of; specifically when looking at fishing mortality and biomass. Rock further noted that only the model changed to better track cold stuns and that the reference points did not change. The AC had a brief discussion on the impact of cold stuns. Staff indicated the last cold stun closure occurred in 2018. While cold stuns can have an impact, the stock is not overfished, the biomass is there; however, fishing mortality is too high, thus overfishing is occurring. Boyce noted that while the stock assessment ends in 2019, the catch has continued to increase, and he expressed concern that there were not enough fish to sustain the fishery. Pensinger indicated that may be an argument for more conservative management to err on the side of caution. The AC further discussed how the fishery has grown in recent years and noted that there were both more fish available as well as more effort (trips). Pensinger noted that the trend is there, we saw effort increasing up to 2019. Flora noted that from a process point all management will be based on the three-year average and effort is monitored in the FMP update each July. Boyce asked if adaptive management could be used to address increases in effort. Flora noted that adaptive management will be included in all upcoming plans. Boyce next asked about ecosystem management and if adaptive management could be used when stricter regulations for other species (i.e., flounder) drives effort up in other fisheries such as trout. Staff noted that we can't predict how effort will change and that we would be hard pressed to put further restrictions on another fishery based on how effort may shift. Smith further cited the need for more regional management and that the effort will always be there. Rock noted that adaptive management usually revolves around the outcome of a stock assessment; however, triggers could be added into the plans to help get in front of a problem before the FMP is back under review. The AC next discussed developing conservation easements or buffers. Staff indicated to do something along those lines would require a quota. Morris indicated that she was against a quota. She further noted that it seems that every time a model is updated there are different results. The AC all agreed that technology has gotten better, and effort has increased.

Scharf asked staff to comment on how the public inputs are used to make changes to the management strategies that are present to the MFC. Pensinger noted that if you look at the scoping document you will see that some of the options changed. For example, the area closures consideration came up enough during the scoping period and now added where it wasn't a consideration at first. Regarding the timeframe of the process, as we gather the input from the ACs we will draft issue papers, Amendment 1, etc. The spotted sea trout AC meetings are likely going to happen late Oct. or Nov. 2023 and we will come back to the MFC next Aug. for them to approve. Scharf asked if the issue papers will come back to the ACs. Rock noted that once we have the Spotted Seatrout AC comments, we will make final revisions and then need to get approval from the MFC to take the plan out to the public, and then back to the regional and standing ACs. Flora noted that the southern AC will likely review the FMP in Jan. 2024.

James asked if there was a way to regulate areas where small trout are aggregated and if more information on ethical angling could be added to the plan. Pensinger and Marine Patrol noted it would be almost impossible to keep people out of areas where small trout are aggregated and stressed the need for public outreach. Boyce and Yates agreed the public needs to be better informed about catch and release mortality.



## CAPE FEAR FISH PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Scharf gave a brief history on the inception of the locks and dams on the Cape Fear River, noting that the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) originally built the structures for shipping and commerce. Currently, the locks are not functional, and the dams are used to store water for local municipalities and industry as well as control flooding. These structures restrict access to historic spawning grounds for anadromous fish populations such as American shad, striped bass, and Atlantic sturgeon. Ten years ago, a rock arch ramp (swim-way) was built at Lock and Dam #1 to allow fish passage; however, the structure was not built to the original specifications due to funding limitation. Over the course of 2013-2015, it was evaluated for fish passage (striped bass, American shad, flathead catfish). American shad did reasonably well (~55-65% passage); however, it did not work very well for striped bass (~20% passage). In 2021, the Cape Fear River Water was funded from the Coastal Recreational Fishing License Grant Program to modify the rock arch. Scharf is currently working with Clemson University researchers and ACOE to re-evaluate if the new modifications have improved fish passage. Preliminary data from the spring of 2022 indicates moderate increase in passage (~40%) by striped bass; however, more tags need to be put out to fully evaluate passage. The goal is to have 100 striped bass and 100 American shad tagged to match the original study. His lab is also currently tagging and tracking Atlantic sturgeon and collecting eggs. Using high resolution acoustic receivers, they have been able to track fine and broad scale movement of sturgeon on the spawning grounds. The goal is to have the work completed by the summer, and hopefully have something to share with the AC this fall. His lab is also tracking the movement and habitat preference of juvenile Atlantic sturgeon in the rivers; juvenile sturgeon remain in their natal rivers for up to three years. The goal with this project is to develop conservation measures to limit the impact of ship strikes. Scharf is also collecting genetic information on Atlantic sturgeon in the Cape Fear River to examine mixing of sub-adults in the southern rivers along the Atlantic coast.

Smith asked about the pulse flows. Scharf noted that the e-flows are environmental pulse of water being release from Jordan Lake to fully submerge the dams. Initial data from the Clemson University study has indicated the e-flows have increased passage. Using acoustic receivers above and below the dams they can further track movement during these flows. Smith asked for more information on how far fish have to go for the eggs to be viable. Scharf indicated they have caught sturgeon eggs at their mats below the dams. He is hopeful the e-flows will promote passage of striped bass above locks and dams 2 and 3 and will further promote better spawning success. Scharf noted there is a federal infrastructure bill, that will allow the locking structures to be repaired, which would enable the ACOE to do conservation locking in the spring. Smith expressed his concern that if we can't show spawning is occurring that the Wildlife Resource Commission will stop stocking striped bass. Scharf noted that there is a lot of opposition to this and there is discussion to try a different brood stock. Smith further noted how big the striped bass fishery once was and how important it is today. Boyce asked about spawning in the Northeast Cape Fear and if there has been any evidence of a spawning population. Stewart indicated that the division has caught two juveniles in survey and data from telemetry work indicates the fish appear to make spawning runs in both the mainstem Cape Fear and Northeast. Stewart further noted that genetic samples show evidence of wild spawned fish. Smith next inquired about the distance needed for the eggs to be suspended in the water column to be viable. Stewart indicated elevated salinities in the river in recent years may be further impacting the distance needed. Smith asked if sturgeon faced the same difficulties associated with egg buoyancy. Scharf noted they are demersal and stick to the bottom and his lab is able to collect them using egg mats. His lab has seen gravid female sturgeon and has collected eggs at lock and dam #1. Our next goal is to determine the number of adults that come back to spawn each year. The AC further discussed the difficulties for sturgeon to get over the dams due to their size and although it would be difficult to do, it would be best to remove the dams as done in other systems.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public signed up in advance to speak.

## **ISSUES FROM AC MEMBERS**

Farnell and Scharf encouraged the AC to provide staff with topics to be discussed at future meetings as well as the joint July meeting. Farnell reminded the AC they can join staff in the field. Morris and Farnell reminded the AC to come to the upcoming 200<sup>th</sup> DMF Anniversary Celebration on June 10<sup>th</sup>.

Tom Smith motioned to adjourn; it was seconded by Ken Siegler. The meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

ELIZABETH S. BISER  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

May 5, 2023

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Marine Fisheries Commission  
Finfish Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Jason Rock, Biologist Supervisor  
Lee Paramore, Northern District Manager  
Fisheries Management Section

**SUBJECT:** Meeting of the Marine Fisheries Commission's Finfish Advisory Committee, April 13, 2023

---

The Marine Fisheries Commission's (MFC) Finfish Advisory Committee (AC) held a meeting in person on Apr. 13, 2023, at the Division of Marine Fisheries, Central District Office, Morehead City. There was also an option for AC members and the public to join the meeting via WebEx and the meeting was live streamed on YouTube. Advisory Committee members could attend in person or on WebEx and could communicate with other committee members. Public comment was available to online attendees if they signed up in advance and was available to the public attending in person.

The following Advisory Committee members were in attendance: Tom Roller, Sarah Gardner, Bill Tarplee, Allyn Powell, Lewis Dunn, Larry Lord, David Mense, Brent Fulcher, and Jeff Buckel. Mike Blanton, Scott Whitley, Randy Proctor, and Chris Hickman attended virtually (Absent: Thomas Brewer).

Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Staff: Lara Klibansky, Lee Paramore, Corrin Flora, Justin Lott, Lucas Pensinger, and Debbie Manley.

Public: Online via Webex: Al Adam and David Sneed. No public were in attendance at the listening station. Seventeen viewers watched on YouTube.

The Finfish AC had 13 members present and a quorum was met.

Finfish AC Co-Chair Sarah Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**A motion was made to approve the agenda by Lewis Dunn. Second by Jeff Buckel. The motion passed unanimously.**

**A motion was made to approve the minutes from the Finfish AC meeting held on January 12, 2023. Motion by Bill Tarplee to approve the minutes. Second by Lewis Dunn. The motion passed unanimously.**

## MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION UPDATE

Lara Klibansky provided an update on the February MFC meeting. The February MFC business meeting was held in New Bern. A recording of the meeting can be found on the NC Department of Environmental Quality YouTube channel and additional information can be found on the Division's website. The commission reviewed a false albacore information paper specific to North Carolina. This paper was prepared at the commission's request and is an update to the 2017 false albacore information paper. A motion was made to develop state-level rulemaking language with management options starting with status quo and allowing for growth for the fishery at various percentage points. Staff are evaluating data, defining terms (i.e., status quo), and will present the analysis at the MFC's May meeting. A final issue paper with management options will be presented at the August or November 2023 business meetings.

Staff gave the commission an overview of the spotted seatrout fishery. The commission provided input on the development of the FMP and Commissioner Cross gave specific management options for consideration. The scoping period for spotted seatrout recently closed and staff will provide the AC an overview later tonight. Public input is a very important part of the FMP process.

The development of the striped mullet supplement and amendment were also discussed at the February MFC meeting. In November, the commission unanimously approved Supplement A to Amendment 1 to go out for public comment for striped mullet which includes a November 7 – December 31 closure to achieve a 22.1% reduction. At the February meeting, the commission was to make its final approval of the supplement; however, after much discussion, no decision was made but the MFC directed the Division to develop regional considerations in the supplement. Staff are currently working on adding regional options to the supplement that will be presented at the May business meeting. Supplement A will only be a temporary measure to address overfishing and will potentially only impact the 2023 season while comprehensive management is developed through Amendment 2, which should be complete prior to the 2024 season.

The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) Amendment was adopted in 2021 and initiated the development of the Stakeholder Engagement for Collaborative Coastal Habitat Initiative (SECCHI). This initiative is meant to develop a public-private partnership to encourage stakeholder engagement. Recently, the SECCHI drafted a coastal habitat resolution requesting the state legislature provide additional cost share funding specific to water quality issues such as nutrient loading and run-off. The resolution was brought before the Marine Fisheries, Environmental Management, Coastal Resources, and Soil and Water Conservation commissions. The MFC as well as the other commissions voted to support this resolution for more funding and encourage people to participate in these types of programs to improve water quality.

A member of the AC enquired if a supplement was the appropriate action at this time given that striped mullet landings in 2022 had increased dramatically and was the fifth largest in history. It seems the stock does not require immediate action. Staff noted that landings are high in 2022 but also cautioned that landings don't always correlate to fishing mortality and while 2022 did see an increase, the assessment still shows a history of overfishing and is in an overfished state and that led to the determination to pursue a supplement to immediately address overfishing. The Division will be going back to the MFC with the supplement in May for their consideration. An AC member noted the unusual number of large fish, particularly males in the harvest in the last year and noted that this was further evidence that a supplement may not be warranted. Staff noted age data are still being looked at for 2022 but recent data does indicate some truncation of the age structure and most of harvest comes from a couple of age classes. An additional comment was made as to why the assessment for striped mullet did not include a continuity run and why there were such differences between the prior assessment and the current assessment. It was noted that the striped mullet leads and assessment staff had addressed this issue and had put together some information related to this topic and that they could be consulted to provide more details. Staff did

note that the assessment does go before an independent peer review panel and they do review the appropriateness of the data and model. The panel did conclude that the current assessment was a stable model that provided sound management advice on the condition of the striped mullet stock. There was additional discussion on data used in the models. It was noted the maturity index was updated in the current model based on newer data. The gill net survey and electrofishing survey were also discussed. The AC asked about the timeline of Amendment 2 and the next assessment. Staff noted that Amendment 2 could potentially be implemented before the fall fishery in 2024 and any new assessment would ideally have a few years of management to assess impacts to spawning stock.

## **JULY JOINT MFC ADVISORY COMMITTEES MEETING PLANNING**

Klibansky noted the meeting will be held on Monday July 10<sup>th</sup> at the Pine Knoll Shores Aquarium and will likely be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be a virtual option and travel will be covered. The goal is to have presentations on some of the topics discussed earlier (stock assessment, FMP development, bycatch, etc.). There may be one or two outside presentations (water quality, climate change). We want discussion amongst the ACs and staff. The event will be recorded if you can't be there in person or virtual and it will be on the web to be viewed by the public only.

The AC discussed the July AC meeting, and several spoke to the opportunity this would be to help educate on various aspects of management and interact with various groups/ACs and discuss various challenges related to both the commercial and recreational fisheries in a structured way. The AC also talked about including more discussions about habitat and how it is impacting the life history of the various species that have FMPs. Staff noted that this is something that the Habitat and Water Quality AC has asked for specifically in their meetings.

## **SPOTTED SEATROUT SCOPING SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

Lucas Pensinger gave an introduction as the spotted seatrout co-lead. He reviewed the scoping process and noted that over 700 individuals participated, either through attending a scoping meeting, submitting written comments or participating in the online questionnaire. For most of the topics brought up, comments varied from support for to support against, and often, everything in between. Lucas reminded the AC this would be a great time to hear their input for potential management strategies.

Lucas proceeded to provide an update on the following comments as they relate to each potential management strategy:

Sustainable harvest options suggested included:

- No quota
- Seasonal closures
- Bag limit reduction
- Trip limit reduction
- Increase minimum size

Recreational management options suggested included:

- Seatrout specific
  - Gamefish
  - Outreach re: catch and release best practices
  - No RCGL harvest
  - Boat limits
  - Eliminate captain/crew limit
  - Limit entry

- General
  - Reduce tournament impact
  - Gear requirements

Commercial Management options suggested included:

- Seatrout specific
  - Hook and line fishery
  - Limited entry
- General options suggested included:
  - Reduce gill net effort
  - Reduce all commercial effort
  - Close personal consumption loophole
  - Commercial subsidies to phase out gill nets
  - Area limits
  - Increase gill net mesh size
  - Required gill net attendance

Protect Spawning Stock Biomass options suggested included:

- Slot limit
- Bag limit
- Increase minimum size
- Cold stun closures

Area Management options suggested included:

- Close areas to gill nets
- Close areas to all spotted seatrout fishing
- Regional/localized management

Commissioner Cross's Proposal

- Overwhelmingly comments were against and felt it was unnecessary
- No quota
- Do not end catch-and-release fishing

General Ideas

- Ecosystem/multi-species management
- Stock fish
- Increase enforcement efforts
- Look at management in other states
- Recreational reporting app

Once the summary was complete, the Chair opened the floor to questions. An AC member asked what other states regionally manage spotted seatrout, specifically with FMP development. Staff noted that most states do not develop FMP's like NC. An ASMFC plan does exist and it was noted that it only has the requirement of setting a minimum size limit of no less than 12 inches. Staff also noted that in N.C. our legislation through the Fisheries Reform Act (FRA) mandates management for sustainable harvest through an FMP. The FRA is the basis for our stock assessments and FMPs. Another AC member asked what other states have stock assessments. Staff provided a quick overview of assessments and stock status of the spotted seatrout fisheries in other south Atlantic and Gulf states. Discussion ensued on the various management strategies of the other states including strategies like slot limits and seasonal closures.

An AC member asked about the impact of release mortality on a species like spotted seatrout and why can't we just have a bag limit and no size limit. Given that many of the fish will die from release is it reasonable to have a minimum size limit? Staff noted that the studies in N.C. indicate that around 10% of fish released are assumed to die so we conclude that 90% will survive. Given this, a minimum size limit does allow a large portion of the population to spawn at least once prior to harvest or being subjected to release mortality. Staff also noted that most anglers will defer from catching small spotted seatrout if they are below the legal-size limit. There was additional discussion on hook and line release mortality studies and the factors that contribute to higher release mortality. It was noted that hook and release mortality is a significant source of removals relative to commercial discards. Some additional discussion occurred on the idea of removing size limits and only allowing what is captured to be harvested until a bag limit is attained. This was noted as an idea for exploration for the plan. It was noted that there is some question on enforceability of such a measure although it does provide some biological merit in theory. Some AC members noted that catch and release is a significant portion of this fishery and this would be highly impactful. How release mortality impacts a slot limit as a management option was discussed. In some cases, you could be creating more discards because an angler now has to catch more fish to capture a limit of fish in the slot. Staff noted that this a good example of how regulations sometimes impact behavior and that is very difficult to account for when trying to meet expected reductions. The AC further acknowledged that this discussion emphasizes the importance of promoting fishing practices that minimize release mortality through education of the angling public. The idea is for continued access to the resource but in doing so we have to figure out how to minimize the impact to the greatest extent possible. This philosophy of catch and release and ethical angling has been well established in freshwater but needs further development with the public in saltwater.

An AC member asked about the timing of the assessment and the impact of COVID. Staff noted that the terminal year of the assessment pre-dated COVID. The AC member noted that we saw a spike in effort during COVID that is not typical of the fishery and those few years should not be considered the norm. An AC member noted that this stock is not heavily managed by ASMFC and he suspects it is due to the stock's vulnerability to cold stuns and that management is really just a moving target since the cold kills are the driving factor on abundance. Staff clarified that ASMFC has had some limited discussion on not retaining a plan for spotted seatrout, this was not related to cold kills but to the lack of the stock being highly migratory. Some states preferred to keep management at the ASMFC level because this was the basis for their management on spotted seatrout.

An AC member commented on how we manage fisheries and stated that in most fisheries we are primarily managing with our regulations for a scenario that creates discards and then we have to manage for the waste that the regulations create. The Division needs to work harder to manage the waste and learn how not to create it. The AC member commented that he did not buy into the hook and line study results because the studies conducted need to mimic the practices in the fishery and not a best-case scenario. Staff agreed that mimicking how fishing occurs is the best sample design to a hook and line release mortality study. The member noted that we need to limit access to resource on the recreational side because effort is not sustainable and the discard mortality in the future will limit the fishery. Most education on how to catch and release goes on deaf ears. Just let them keep their limit and go to the dock and that would be enforceable. Another AC member disagreed with the idea of a catch and quit management strategy and said this type of strategy in an inshore fishery that has a large catch and release component requires a different approach. There was additional discussion on gear size and selectivity in the commercial fishery primarily centered around ways to manage fisheries different by allowing retention outside of typical size limits to reduce discard mortality. Red drum and flounder were given as examples of FMPs where size limits were creating discards, and this is a major contributor to fishing mortality and the spotted seatrout may be an FMP where other ideas can be explored to avoid this issue.

An AC member asked what data exist relative to spotted seatrout that would indicate that there is an issue with the stock. Staff noted that biomass in the stock is not the issue. The stock is above the target. What we have seen in the fishery is an increase in fishing effort and that fishing mortality in the terminal year was above the threshold. The higher effort in the fishery has also corresponded to a period of higher abundance and it shows the capacity to exploit the stock exists with increased effort during times of abundance and good angler success. A member asked why we need a stock assessment when winter kills can be such a factor and why can't we just use fishery independent indices to set management from. Staff noted that the most current stock assessment addressed the research need from the prior assessment which was to account for natural mortality from winter kills. This new approach incorporates information on the natural mortality of cold stuns and the model was able to pick up on those signals. This was an improvement over our prior stock assessment. There was additional discussion on cold kills and how it impacts the stock across all sizes of fish in the population. Staff noted that as opposed to indices of abundance a stock assessment provides a much broader picture based on more data inputs. It allows us to quantify fishing mortality and biomass as opposed to just trends. An AC member noted that based on his look at the data from the prior assessment, it did not appear that closures of the fishery after a cold kill have had any impact on stock recovery. Staff responded that they felt it would be best to look at results from the current stock assessment where variable natural mortality from cold kill is part of the assessment. The member noted it may also have been more of the recruitment after a spawn following a cold kill was not different before or after the cold kill regulation. Staff noted they appreciated the input and could look further into this observation.

Another AC member suggested that there are techniques such as Management Strategy Evaluations to look at an iterative process to determine what management strategies may perform best. In the modeling one of the techniques is to go out and scope the public on what they would want to see in the fishery and then evaluate how that strategy may perform. Through scoping did we see much support for some of the ACs suggestion for a catch and quit strategy or was catch and release more widely requested? Staff noted that catch and quit was not a popular idea during scoping. There was interest in a trophy fishery and particularly in allowing a slot limit with a trophy fish. Most spoke directly in opposition to catch and quit in reference to the Cross proposal. The AC member then further noted that if catch and release is a preferred management strategy of the public and that if the fishery continues to expand, it is possible other measures such as limiting effort could be required in some scenarios and these are all things to be evaluated.

An AC member asked about reproductive capacity of spotted seatrout related to size and if there is a size limit or slot limit that could be set to maximize reproductive potential. Staff noted that this is possible but not sure we have the data to determine the exact size where this could be maximized. Staff noted that specific fecundity data is not readily available in N.C. but that in general fecundity increases at a high rate as size increases. An AC member noted that it is not just the size of the fish but the abundance of the fish across sizes that is important in determining egg production. Further discussion provided some examples of management for other species where fecundity data does allow for measures of spawner potential and egg production to be used as a measure of stock status.

Another AC member commented that the effectiveness of any rule and regulation is directly tied to the ability to enforce those measures. He noted that he has had a lot of feedback and it was also brought up during scoping meetings that enforcement seems to be lacking in coastal N.C. How can we as a committee step up any weaknesses in enforcement to make the Commission aware of this issue? Staff noted that the Division has limited officers and the best course of action is to make your legislators aware of the need for increased enforcement to protect our coastal fishery resources. It is the prerogative of the AC if they desire to make a statement to the MFC. Staff noted that comments from the AC would be captured in the minutes and provided to the MFC at their May meeting and that three MFC members were



present and serve as members of the Finfish AC. There was some discussion on reciprocity with WRC officers on water and if that existed. Staff noted that there is overlap in joint waters but generally fishery regulations don't overlap as each agency has their own regulations and jurisdictions. Staff noted that Marine Patrol does work closely with WRC officers in various situations. Additional discussion centered around the need for stability with not just Marine Patrol but also with other positions across the Division and the high rate of turnover that occurs and losing talented staff.

An AC member noted that while we often disagree on issues and come from different sectors it should be noted that we have great fisheries and the level and quality of data provided by the Division should be commended. Based on experience at the federal level on various committees, many other states look to N.C. for the data they provide and that is something we should be proud of.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

ELIZABETH S. BISER  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

Apr. 20, 2023

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Marine Fisheries Commission  
Shellfish/Crustacean Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Anne Deaton, Habitat Program Manager, Habitat and Enhancement Section  
Tina Moore, Southern District Manager, Fisheries Management Section

**SUBJECT:** Meeting of the Marine Fisheries Commission's Shellfish Crustacean Advisory Committee, April 18, 2023

---

The Marine Fisheries Commission's Shellfish/Crustacean advisory committee (AC) held an in-person meeting on Apr. 18, 2023, at the Division of Marine Fisheries, Central District Office, Morehead City, NC, or attend virtually if needed.

The following AC members were in attendance: Ana Shellem, Mike Marshall, Ted Wilgis. Online: Lauren Burch, Jim Hardin, Tim Willis, Mike Blanton, Doug Cross. Absent: Brian Shepard, Adam Tyler, Bruce Morris, Mary Sue Hamann,

Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Staff: Lara Klibansky, Paula Farnell, Hope Wade, Corrin Flora, Tina Moore, Anne Deaton, Carter Witten, Jason Rock

Public: Kelly Schoolcraft, Glen Skinner. Five viewers watched on YouTube.

Shellfish/Crustacean AC Chair Ana Shellem called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

Chair Shellem provided some introductory remarks and let AC members introduce themselves. The Shellfish/Crustacean AC did not meet quorum initially but did once three AC members arrived late.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**A motion was made by Mike Marshall to approve the agenda. Second by Jim Hardin. The motion passed without objection.**

**A motion was made by Mike Marshall to approve the minutes from the Shellfish/Crustacean AC meeting held on Jan. 17, 2023. Second by Jim Hardin. The motion passed without objection.**

**MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION UPDATE**

Lara Klibansky provided an update on the February MFC meeting. The Feb. MFC business meeting was held in New Bern. A recording of the meeting can be found on the NC Department of Environmental Quality YouTube channel and additional information can be found on the Division's website. The commission reviewed a false albacore information paper specific to North Carolina. This paper was

prepared at the commission's request and is an update to the 2017 false albacore information paper. A motion was made to develop state-level rulemaking language with management options starting with status quo and allowing for growth for the fishery at various percentage points. Staff are evaluating data, defining terms (i.e., status quo), and will present the analysis at the MFC's May meeting. A final issue paper with management options will be presented at the Aug. or Nov. 2023 business meetings.

Staff gave the commission an overview of the spotted sea trout fishery. The commission provided input on the development of the FMP and Commissioner Cross gave specific management options for consideration. The scoping period for spotted sea trout recently closed and staff will provide the AC an overview later tonight. Public input is a very important part of the FMP process.

The development of the striped mullet supplement and amendment were also discussed at the February MFC meeting. In November, the commission unanimously approved Supplement A to Amendment 1 to go out for public comment for striped mullet which includes a Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> – Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> closure to achieve a 22.1% reduction. At the February meeting, the commission was to make its final approval of the supplement; however, after much discussion, no decision was made. Staff are currently working on regional options at the request of the commission to be presented at the May business meeting. Supplement A will only be a temporary measure to address overfishing and will potentially only impact the 2023 season while comprehensive management is developed through Amendment 2, which should be complete prior to the 2024 season.

The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) Amendment was adopted in 2021 and initiated the development of the Stakeholder Engagement for Collaborative Coastal Habitat Initiative (SECCHI). This initiative is meant to develop a public-private partnership to encourage stakeholder engagement. Recently, the SECCHI drafted a coastal habitat resolution requesting the state legislature provide additional cost share funding specific to water quality issues such as nutrient loading and run-off. The resolution was brought before the Marine Fisheries, Environmental Management, Coastal Resources, and Soil and Water Conservation commissions. The MFC as well as the other commissions voted to support this resolution for more funding and encourage people to participate in these types of programs to improve water quality.

## **SHELLFISH LEASE PROGRAM AND ENTERPRISE AREAS**

Owen Mulvey-McFerron, Shellfish Lease Coordinator, provided an overview of lease application activity and recent changes in the shellfish lease program to improve program efficiency. He summarized past application activity – in 2022 DMF received 84 shellfish lease applications. From February through April 2023, public hearings were held in Carteret, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, Hyde, and Dare counties. Final determination on those lease applications is pending. The 2023 shellfish lease application period opened on March 1st, and will close on August 1st. So far, DMF has received five applications and it's expected to be another busy application season.

Procedural changes in the shellfish lease program included consolidating the annual rent notices, production reports, and work authorizations into a single mailing which is sent to all leaseholders in January. A one-page summary of newly adopted rules was included in the mailouts so leaseholders are aware of any impacts these rule changes may have on their operations.

Shellfish lease renewal packets, which are sent out at the end of the 10-year shellfish lease contract period, will now include copies of the original shellfish lease application and management plan for reference to aid the leaseholders in filling the renewal application. On a similar note, staff developed template forms to assist leaseholders with, and expedite the shellfish lease transfer process, which has shown increased interest over the past few years. They are also increasing the availability of lease siting, storm preparedness, gear and marine debris management, and technical guidance resources for applicants

and leaseholders, developing new resource guides, and making new and existing resources available on the website.

The Aquaculture Operations Permit (AOP) renewal packet was streamlined with a one-page renewal form, fillable PDFs, and digital filing. This has facilitated a 10-day turnaround time for AOPs, as well as a 48 hour to 72 hour turnaround for Intro and Aquaculture Seed Transplant Permits. Lastly, the development of the AOP inspection tool will facilitate expedited inspections and ensure consistency throughout the annual inspection process.

Zach Harrison, Aquaculture Permits Coordinator, provided an update to the relay program. The Relay Program allows Shellfish Lease and Franchise holders to harvest shellfish in designated polluted areas and transport them to their lease or franchise between April 1 and May 15. In 2022, DMF made the public aware that phasing out the Relay Program had begun, with three final seasons. The Relay Program is being phased out for several factors:

- The 2019 Aquaculture Bill removed the ability of shellfish lease and franchise holders from meeting annual production requirements through the Relay Program.
- The National Shellfish Sanitation Program's (NSSP) requires all shellfish moved from polluted areas to be monitored by Marine Patrol. Officers must oversee the harvest, transport, and placement of relayed shellfish. Marine Patrol staff shortages have made this requirement challenging, particularly due to the relatively low participation rates.
- There has been a continuous decrease in the participation of this program in the past ten years.

As a result of these last two factors, DMF limited the relay season in 2019 to two days per week in two areas. 2021 Relay season included three locations in Carteret County and three locations in the Southern Onslow Bay counties, New Hanover, Pender, and Onslow. Based on input from participants, the 2022 season was modified to incorporate three additional southern locations that were rotated. Relay activity remained limited to two days/week for six weeks. A limiting factor with the extent of relay is availability of Marine Patrol officers. There were 32 participants in 2021 and 37 in 2022, with daily average participation across all locations at five to eight transplanted per day, and the daily average by location was three and four transplanted. The end date for relay is set for May 1, 2024.

At the February 2022 MFC meeting, a commissioner voiced concern that phasing out the relay program would eliminate a means for bottom lease holders to produce shellfish without cages/gear. Harrison explained that the total number of bottom and water column leases in the past four years increased but the total number of bottom-only leases has remained steady and that the majority of bottom leases and franchises are meeting production without utilizing the relay program.

Committee members had specific questions on the locations relayed in 2022 and the reporting requirements for the relayed oysters. Tim Willis noted the benefits of oysters to improve water quality and if DMF is considering adding more leases to the systems due to the benefits to the ecosystem? Mulvey-McFerron agreed on the benefits of oysters to improving water quality and indicated the number of lease applications annually has been growing. Shellem said she exclusively harvests wild shellfish and would be discouraged if all harvest was exclusive to private bottom. Ted Wilgis had questions about the different amounts relayed between districts. Harrison noted it depends on the proximity to leases; for example there is no relay occurring in Pamlico Sound due to the distances to travel to transport to a lease. District 3 counties – Onslow, Pender, and New Hanover – tend to have more relay activity due to the more compressed waterbodies and proximity to active leases. Wilgis asked if a red tide happened again would the rules allow relay to open up again? Harrison noted the style of leases have diversified and are more like farming, so there should not be as much risk as in the past. The Aquaculture Bill allows production to come from planting seed, but relay will no longer count. Wilgis noted research has identified polluted areas act like sanctuaries so long as the oysters are healthy. Mike Marshall asked what

the mechanism was to remove relay? Harrison identified rule changes are in process to remove relay and Seed Oyster Management Areas (SOMA) are still in effect to relay seed to leases. Marshall noted the red tide relay did not work in most areas, only in small creeks down south. It was more a means to keep fishermen employed. Marshall noted both relay from polluted areas and SOMA originated well before the red tide event in 1987/88.

### **SPOTTED SEATROUT SCOPING PERIOD DISCUSSION**

Jason Rock gave a brief overview of comments received during the March 14-24 spotted sea trout scoping period. Overall, there was a lot of participation with over 700 people providing comments online or in person. Comments ranged from strongly “for” or “against” and everything in between. Regarding sustainable harvest, comments included arguments for and against a quota, seasonal closures, bag limit reduction, trip limit reduction, and an increase in minimum size. For recreational management there was support for making spotted seatrout a game fish, outreach for catch and release best practices, ending the use of recreational commercial gear licenses, boat limits, eliminating captain and crew limits, and limited entry into the fishery. General recreational comments included reducing the impact of catch and release tournaments and implementation of gear requirements. Commercial comments included making it entirely a hook and line fishery with limited entry. General commercial comments included gill net limits, closing the personal consumption loophole, area limits, phasing out gill net limits, increased gill net mesh size, gill net attendance regardless of area or time, and limited entry. Regarding protecting spawning stock biomass, comments included bag limit reductions, increased minimum size, and modifying cold stun protocols. Area management came up quite a lot during the scoping period and included closing certain areas to gill nets and/or all spotted sea trout fishing as well as regional management. Commissioner Cross’s strategy was also discussed at the scoping meetings and the public was overwhelmingly against quota allocation. Overall, there was general opposition to a quota and ending catch and release fishing. Multispecies management, stocking, increasing enforcement, considering management in other states, and developing a recreational reporting app (mandatory and optional reporting) were also brought up.

Wilgis asked how the CHPP plays into the spotted seatrout amendment. Anne Deaton responded staff continue to work on Strategic Habitat Areas (SHA) ground truthing. Sampling has been completed in the SHAs from Core Sound south to the SC/NC line and staff are working on the report. There is higher diversity in SHAs than non-SHAs. Habitat staff on the spotted seatrout PDT will provide a literature update on habitats known to be used by the species in the amendment.

### **JULY JOINT MFC ADVISORY COMMITTEES MEETING PLANNING**

Klibansky noted the meeting will be held on Monday July 10<sup>th</sup> at the Pine Knoll Shores Aquarium and will likely be held from 10 am to 3 pm. There will be a virtual option and travel will be covered. The goal is to have presentations on some of the topics discussed earlier (stock assessment, FMP development, bycatch, etc.). There may be one or two outside presentations (water quality, climate change). We want discussion amongst the ACs and staff. The event will be recorded if you can’t be there in person or virtual and it will be on the web to be viewed by the public only.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kelly Schoolcraft runs a charter boat business out of Hatteras where he has customers go clamming, shelling, and fishing on a trip. Every year he is seeing an increase in bay scallops. He can’t understand why Carteret County has had an opening for bay scallops this season but not in Pamlico Sound with the abundance of scallops. He would like to see an opening to bay scallops in his area especially in the warmer months (April – August) so he can have his customers enjoy their harvest. He has seen hundreds of small bay scallops. It is a public resource that people should access. Tina Moore, former bay scallop

biologist, noted bay scallops are annual and the opening to harvest is timed to winter (late Jan. through Apr.) when adults are present from that one cohort and less overlap with next year's juveniles. We are trying to get them back to historic levels present prior to the red tide. In the Bay Scallop FMP there are regional triggers associated with DMF sampling in Oct-Dec to determine if sampling abundance meets the required thresholds for opening the third Monday in Jan. through Apr. 1. She provided an overview of the sampling of set sites as well as at-will sites which we will go to based on information from what people see on the water and would appreciate coordinates of any known areas with scallops. Schoolcraft noted some areas where he observed scallops included Sandy Bay, behind the bath house at Frisco, and behind Portsmouth Island. The last opening to harvest bay scallops in the Pamlico Sound region was in 2009. Moore noted that scallops are often concentrated in patches but overall there is not enough to meet the trigger threshold for opening when sampling across the region. Staff will follow up with Mr. Schoolcraft. Shellem noted she has seen bay scallops where she shellfishes down south as well and asked Mr. Schoolcraft if he has tried harvesting ribbed mussels. She said a hori hori knife is an excellent tool for taking the mussels from their attachment.

Glen Skinner wanted to clarify that it wasn't accurate to say that there was no appetite for doing away with catch and release. Skinner said he did say at one of the scoping meetings there is a problem with dead discards because of the amount of catch and release ongoing in the recreational fishery. He noted that the biggest problem for spotted seatrout is the amount of dead discards, which has to be addressed. We cannot just cut landings.

### **ISSUES FROM AC MEMBERS**

Ted Wilgis mentioned Oyster Summit May 9-10 in Raleigh. Can go to [NCCoast.org](http://NCCoast.org) to get information and register. Lara mentioned the DMF Jamboree will occur June 10<sup>th</sup> at the DMF Headquarters office location in Morehead City.

### **PLAN AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

No additional items were requested.

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 7:21 p.m.



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

ELIZABETH S. BISER  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

Apr 20, 2023

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Marine Fisheries Commission  
Habitat and Water Quality Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Anne Deaton, Habitat Program Manager, Habitat and Enhancement Section  
Jimmy Harrison, Fisheries Resource Specialist, Habitat and Enhancement Section

**SUBJECT:** Meeting of the Marine Fisheries Commission's Habitat and Water Quality Advisory Committee,  
Apr 19, 2023

---

The Marine Fisheries Commission's (MFC) Habitat and Water Quality Advisory Committee (AC) held an in-person meeting on Apr 19, 2023, at the Division of Marine Fisheries, Central District Office, Morehead City, NC, or could attend virtually.

The following AC members were in attendance: Ana Shellem, Bart Durham, David Glenn, Nathan Hall, Scott Leahy, Mark Sonder. Online: Doug Rader, Lisa Rider (Absent: Markham Parrish, Joel Fodrie; James Hall has resigned)

Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Staff: Paula Farnell, Debbie Manley, Corrin Flora, Anne Deaton, Jimmy Harrison, Jason Parker, Lucas Pensinger, Jason Rock, Andy Haines, Tina Moore, Mike Loeffler, Garland Yopp

Public: None in attendance, two viewers watched on YouTube.

Habitat and Water Quality Chair Ana Shellem called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

The chair invited members to introduce themselves and a quorum was met.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**A motion was made by Scott Leahy to approve the minutes from the Habitat and Water Quality AC meeting held on January 18, 2023. Second by Mark Sonder. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION UPDATE**

Paula Farnell provided an update on the February MFC meeting held in New Bern. Similar to AC meetings, MFC meetings are recorded and available on the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) YouTube channel and through DMF website. The next meeting is May 24 at the Beaufort Hotel in Beaufort.

The Commission reviewed a false albacore information paper that was prepared by the Division at the direction of the MFC. This was an update to a 2017 information paper reviewing the overall fishery in North Carolina. The MFC passed a motion asking staff to develop rulemaking language with management options for false albacore, starting with the status quo and allowing for growth in the fishery at various percentage points. Staff have been reviewing available data and will present information at various upcoming meetings.

In February, Spotted Seatrout staff leads presented an overview of the spotted seatrout fishery and received input from commissioners on items for consideration in FMP development. The scoping period recently closed, so FMP development is in very early stages.

In November 2022, the Commission selected their preferred management option for Striped Mullet Supplement A, which was for state-wide November 7 to December 31 season closure, estimated to result in a 22.1% reduction. At the February meeting, the commission was to make its final approval of the supplement but after discussion, no decision was made. Staff are currently working on regional options at the request of the commission to be presented at the May business meeting. Supplement A will only be a temporary measure to address overfishing and will potentially only impact the 2023 season while comprehensive management is developed through Amendment 2, which should be complete prior to the 2024 season.

The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) Amendment was adopted in 2021 and initiated the development of the Stakeholder Engagement for Collaborative Coastal Habitat Initiative (SECCHI). This initiative is meant to develop a public-private partnership to encourage stakeholder engagement. Recently, the SECCHI drafted a coastal habitat resolution requesting the state legislature provide additional cost share funding specific to water quality issues such as nutrient loading and run-off. The resolution was brought before the Marine Fisheries, Environmental Management, Coastal Resources, and Soil and Water Conservation commissions. The MFC as well as the other commissions voted to support this resolution for more funding and encourage people to participate in these types of programs to improve water quality.

## **JULY JOINT MFC ADVISORY COMMITTEES MEETING PLANNING**

The Joint AC meeting will be July 10 at the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores and will be from approximately 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. The aquarium has agreed to a reduced rate, allowing for funds to be available for hotel rooms. Purpose of the joint AC meeting is collaboration and cross-sharing of information and expertise. Stock assessments, FMPs, AC role in FMP process, etc.

## **SPOTTED SEATROUT SCOPING PERIOD**

Lucas Pensinger and Jason Rock reviewed discussion from the four Spotted Seatrout scoping meetings held in March. The scoping period was March 13 through 24 and over 700 people participated (attending or submitting comments). Pensinger gave a brief overview of comments received during the scoping period. Comments ranging from strongly “for” and “against” and everything in between. Regarding sustainable harvest, comments ranged from no quota/quota, seasonal closures, bag limit reduction, trip limit reduction, and increase in minimum size. For recreational management there was support for making spotted seatrout a game fish, outreach for catch and release best practices, ending the use of recreational commercial gear licenses, boat limits, eliminating captain and crew limits, and limited entry. General recreational comments included reducing the impact of catch and release tournaments, and gear requirements. Commercial comments included making it entirely a hook and line fishery with limited entry. General commercial comments included gill net limits, closing the personal consumption loophole, area limits, phasing out gill net limits, increased gill net mesh size, gill net attendance regardless of area



or time, and limited entry. Regarding protecting spawning stock biomass, comments included bag limit reductions, increase minimum size, and modifying cold stun protocols. Area management came up quite a lot during the scoping period and included closing certain areas to gill nets and/or all spotted sea trout fishing, and regional management. Commissioner Cross's strategy was also discussed at the scoping meetings and the public was overwhelming against quota allocation. Overall, there was general opposition to a quota and ending catch and release fishing. Multispecies management, stocking, increasing enforcement, considering management in other states, and developing a recreational reporting app (mandatory and optional reporting) were also brought up.

Scott Leahy asked how catch and release mortality was determined. Staff replied it is delayed mortality, and the rate was determined by a study done in NC. Average mortality is ten percent, but it depends on time of year, temperature, and handling. Doug Rader asked if they received any comments on habitat or water quality issues at various life history stages. They did not. Rader noted that spotted seatrout is an estuarine-dependent species and will likely be stressed by estuarine nursery area stresses. Rader also asked if we know if habitat needs are being met. Pensinger said that based on high spawning stock biomass (SSB), their habitat needs appear to be met. The fishery is above target and threshold levels. Rader noted that's based on current conditions, but what about over time as climate change impacts continue, such as increased temperature and habitat change. Will there be bottlenecks. Rock said there seems to be good recruitment now. Anne Deaton mentioned NOAA Fisheries conducted a climate vulnerability assessment for South Atlantic fish and spotted seatrout was included in the assessment. The final report has not been finished yet. Rader said the HWQ AC would like to help as questions develop.

## **SHELLFISH SANITATION ON SHELLFISH HARVEST CLOSURES**

Andy Haines gave an overview of the Shellfish Sanitation and Recreational Water Quality Section (SSRQ). He focused on methods to classify waters for shellfish harvest and inspect shellfish plants. They are a public health agency responsible for assuring shellfish are safe for consumption. The recreational water quality sampling assesses safety for human activity such as swimming. Because shellfish filter 25-50 gallons of water per day, they are susceptible to accumulating pollutants. They can concentrate pathogens up to 100 times greater than ambient waters. They need to make sure shellfish come from healthy waters because they're typically eaten raw.

Monitoring shellfish for consumption suitability began in 1925 due to typhoid outbreaks. The SSRQ is part of the National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP), and therefore must be in compliance with criteria contained in the NSSP Guide for Control of Molluscan Shellfish Model Ordinance.

Haines reviewed the growing areas and how staff samples, conducts shoreline surveys to identify pollutant sources, and hydrographic surveys to look at pollutant dispersal. Shoreline surveys look at on-site systems, functionality of WWTPs, marina, development, ditch and stormwater outfalls that could be carrying runoff to shellfish waters. These pollutant sources are mapped in the field. Hydrographic studies inject fluorescent dye into waste stream to track contaminant dispersion/dilution to determine closure boundaries. For bacteriological sampling, they are required to sample each area at least 6 times/yr. They analyze fecal coliform, an indicator of other bacteria and contaminants nearby.

Stormwater runoff, particularly from large storm/rain events, can impact water quality and therefore shellfish bacteria levels. Haines explained the effect of rain and that certain thresholds of rain (e.g., 1-2.5 inches) in shellfish harvest classifications cause temporary closures until resampling finds acceptable levels. Maps are available to see permanent and temporary closures (<https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/shellfish-sanitation-and-recreational-water-quality>). There are 22 growing areas under conditional management (42,857 acres). Increased rainfall quantities correlate with increased number of closure days; also results in increased work taking samples

to re-open. The program collects approximately 5,500 samples per year, and rainfall events result in additional samples – roughly 1,400 per year depending on frequency of rain events.

Bart Durham asked about the percent of onsite systems they find during shoreline surveys that are failing. Haines said about 3-5 within a watershed, with rural watersheds having more. There can also be underground issues that can't be observed. Durham also asked about frequency of wastewater treatment plant failures and whether they can dump a percent of the sewage. Haines noted that many treatment plants have been upgraded over the past 20 years, resulting in fewer failures, and they are not allowed to discharge untreated sewage in NC. He also said that infiltration from leaky collection pipes is not as bad anymore. Durham asked where is most of the bacteria coming from; Haines replied wildlife, birds, and pet waste that are carried into the water with runoff. Durham said based on problems he has seen at Falls Lake and inland, that systems further up may not be working as well. Deaton noted that pollution from wastewater treatment plants and their collection lines was addressed in the 2021 CHPP. The Division of Water Resources (DWR) has said that issues with collection pipes and treatment plants are still an issue because there are so many, and its expense to maintain or upgrade. The Division of Water Infrastructure (DWI) received a large increase in funding this year from federal infrastructure money and the state. Local entities have to apply for the funding. The AC discussed other pollutants that could impact human health, including toxins.

Commissioner Shellem mentioned seeing a large number of birds fly over the marsh and oysters, land and die suddenly, possibly due to bird flu. Mark Sonders asked if hog lagoon waste could reach the coast and impact shellfish. Lisa Rider said they just started a study to look at that and will be using DNA tracking to see if they can detect wild or farm raised hog waste in the New River. Sonders asked about effect of drought and increased salinity on water quality and Haines said they see improvements in bacteria counts when dry and can sometimes open Conditionally Approved Closed areas. The AC discussed sources of rainfall data to assist Shellfish Sanitation. David Glen mentioned that the public can volunteer to record rainfall with the Community Collaboration Rain, Hail, and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS; <https://www.cocorahs.org/>), and they especially need more volunteers in rural areas.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF A WATER CLARITY STANDARD IN NC**

Nathan Hall, AC member and scientist at UNC- Chapel Hill, gave a presentation on evaluation of water clarity metrics for protection of SAV in Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system. He began by explaining that this work was initiated due to recommendations in the 2021 CHPP SAV Issue Paper that call for developing water clarity and nutrient standards sufficient for SAV survival. Light requirements differ between the high and low salinity grasses due to differences in underground biomass and plant canopy structure. He reviewed minimum light requirements for both at their documented maximum depth. The Nutrient Criteria Development Plan Scientific Advisory Council has agreed on targets for water clarity standards for all waterbodies that have supported SAV during the growing season (May – October). Light is attenuated by chlorophyll a, turbidity, and tannins (color from dissolved organic matter – C-DOM). Hall explained that once you know how much light is needed, you can determine maximum values for these light-affecting parameters. His role for the APNEP project was to validate and refine as needed an existing optical model with NC data, in both high and low salinity waters. By doing that, it can be determined if existing chlorophyll a, and turbidity standards are sufficient and what is the light climate for SAV in NC. He found that the model worked good in high salinity waters but underestimated in low salinity waters. He is working to re-calibrate for these areas and had to collect more data on chlorophyll and C-DOM in low salinity waters. For high salinity, he estimated C-DOM from salinity. Results found that the existing chlorophyll standard was alright, but turbidity standard is too high. Since turbidity is harder to control (wind), chlorophyll as well as turbidity will need to be lowered to result in SAV improvement. Hall showed graphs of exiting water quality data for Albemarle Sound, Neuse, and Pamlico rivers. Some rivers do have SAV present in upstream areas. For the most part, Chowan and Albemarle

stations are not meeting the criteria. Upstream water is typically not as clear and not going to meet the standard, while downstream will. Bogue Sound was mostly above proposed criteria. Core Sound is basically ideal for SAV because of less development and proximity to inlets. He will be continuing to work on re-calibrating the model for low salinity waters. While we have a lot of secchi data, which indicates most of the waters are not meeting the water clarity target, more precise water clarity data (Photosynthetic Active Radiation (PAR), chlorophyll a, C-DOM) is needed for assessing the standard. Rader asked if one could use citizen science to get more data. Hall noted one limitation of that is the high cost of the equipment.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

### **ISSUES FROM AC MEMBERS**

Sonde said a dolphin had its tail cut off and found dead. A necropsy is being done, but he guesses it was from a commercial fisherman. He asked if there could be a way to prevent entanglement, similar to a “TED” for gillnets. Farnell said she would check. Leahy said that further north (e.g., New Jersey) they use pingers to deter whales. As another issue, Leahy would like the AC to look into mitigating strategies for new development. He is voluntarily working on a living shoreline but was told he cannot add live oysters to it because the waters were closed to shellfish harvest. He is voicing his frustration over the fact that property owners cannot voluntarily mitigate impacts by placing shellfish on their property (for water quality improvement) in closed waters.

It was noted that links would be included in a post-meeting follow-up email.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

ELIZABETH S. BISER  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

April 5, 2023

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

**FROM:** William Brantley, Grants Program Manager, Administrative and Maintenance Services Section

**SUBJECT:** March 10, 2023 MFC CRFL Advisory Committee Meeting

---

### Issue

The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Advisory Committee (MFC AC) met at 1 p.m. on Friday, March 10, 2023 to review and provide advice on the applications received in response to the 2022-2023 Coastal Recreational Fishing License (CRFL) Request for Proposals (RFP).

### Findings

The MFC AC reviewed and provided advice on 7 RFP applications received that are under consideration for funding. Each of these proposals are focused on outreach and education.

### Action Needed

For informational purposes only, **no action is needed at this time.**

### Attachments

- 1) Draft meeting minutes from the March 10, 2023 MFC CRFL AC meeting



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

ELIZABETH S. BISER  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Marine Fisheries Commission Coastal Recreational Fishing License Advisory Committee (MFC AC)

FROM: William Brantley, Grants Program Manager  
Division of Marine Fisheries, NCDEQ

DATE: March 27, 2023

SUBJECT: NC MFC AC Meeting

The Marine Fisheries Commission Coastal Recreational Fishing License Advisory Committee (MFC AC) met at 1 p.m. on Friday, March 10, 2023 via Microsoft Teams. The meeting was livestreamed on YouTube. A listening station was available at the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries Headquarters Office. The following attended the meeting:

MFC AC: Chairman Robert McNeil, Rob Bizzell, Tom Roller, Doug Raider

DMF Staff: William Brantley, Beth Govoni, Lara Klibansky, Mike Loeffler

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Robert McNeil called the meeting to order, and William Brantley read a reminder of the duty to avoid conflicts of interest (N.C.G.S. 138A-15e). No known conflicts of interest were noted.

Lara Klibansky called role.

**Rob Bizzell made a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Tom Roller seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with present members voting.**

**Tom Roller made a motion to approve the minutes. Rob Bizzell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with present members voting.**

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Two public comments were received for this meeting and distributed to AC members.

### COMMITTEE BRIEF ON THE MFC CRFL AC ROLES

William Brantley briefed the team on the MFC AC's role in providing advice on the proposals received during the 2022-2023 Request for Proposal (RFP) process. This included the reason for the committee's implementation, their role in providing advice, and other applicable details. Brantley discussed the role of the MFC AC's past advice in funding projects, and that information from the meeting would be presented to the DMF Director's Office for consideration in funding new proposals.

## **DISCUSSION ON PROPOSALS**

### **Military Appreciation Day**

This project was submitted by Military Appreciation Day, Inc. and Chris Milks. Requested funding for this project, over a period of 3 years, is \$75,000, and the applicant is providing match in the amount of \$75,000 over 3 years. This organization's mission and proposal is to support events where they get volunteer captains to take active-duty troops fishing for a day and hold a large family style picnic after their day of fishing.

**Motion by Rob Bizzell to recommend funding for the project titled "Military Appreciation Day" with due consideration given to whether or not it should be 3-year funding. Second by Tom Roller. The motion carried unanimously with present members voting.**

### **Hooked on the New River Oyster Highway – A public guide to fishing and water quality on the New River**

This project was submitted by the City of Jacksonville and Pat Donovan-Brandenburg. Requested funding for this project, over a period of 3 years, is \$152,139.76, and the applicant is providing match in the amount of \$26,260 over 3 years. This City's proposal is to introduce members of the fishing public to the angling opportunities that currently exist through actual in-person fishing seminars and on water fishing activities. The program will be supplemented with a printed guide and app that identifies aquatic species.

**Motion by Rob Bizzell to recommend funding for the project titled "Hooked on the New River Oyster Highway – A public guide to fishing and water quality on the New River." Second by Tom Roller. Motion carries unanimously.**

### **Expanding recreational fishing access by enhancing the Morris Landing Clean Water Reserve Pier**

This project was submitted by the Town of Holly Ridge and Audrey Madia. Requested funding for this project over a period of 1.5 years is \$154,425. The Town's proposal is to replace the deck boards and hand railings on the Morris Landing Clean Water Reserve pier, add a "T" at the end of the pier, extend a walk-way into the marsh area, bring the current pier into ADA compliance, install bollards, and develop/install signage to educate visitors. Further discussion was focused on providing credit through signage to DMF and the CRFL program as well as potentialities for the future development.

**Motion by Rob Bizzell to recommend funding for the project titled “Expanding recreational fishing access by enhancing the Morris Landing Clean Water Reserve pier.” Second by Tom Roller. Motion carries unanimously.**

**Surf City Boating Access Area Renovation**

This project was submitted by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and Gary Gardner. Requested funding for this project, over a period of 9 months, is \$301,850. The WRC’s proposal is for the improvement of the Surf City Boating Access Area and would replace fixed docks with floating docks. This application also proposes to offer appropriate ADA parking and pave heavy use portions of the site. Further discussion was focused on providing credit through signage to DMF and the CRFL program on site at the ramp, and ensure signage at previously funded ramps.

Concerns were issued over the amount of match provided, and DMF carrying the full costs. The two organizations may have the opportunity to work together more closely. Future maintenance of these projects should not exceed 50% of the budgeted costs from DMF.

**Motion by Tom Roller to recommend funding for the project titled “Surf City Boating Access Area renovation.” Motion withdrawn.**

**Motion by Robert Bizzell to recommend funding for the project titled “Surf City Boating Access Area renovation at 50% of the funding request.” Second by Tom Roller. Motion carries unanimously.**

**Midway Drive Boating Access Area – Replacement of Bulkhead/Breakwater**

This project was submitted by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and Ben Soloman. Requested funding for the Midway Drive project, over a period of 15 months, is \$75,000 and \$2,000 in match is provided. The application proposes to provide marine based improvements to the damaged bulkheading and breakwater.

**Cannon’s Ferry Boating Access Area -Breakwater Replacement**

This project was submitted by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and Ben Soloman. Requested funding for the Cannon’s Ferry project, over a period of 7 months, is \$75,000 and \$2,000 in match is provided. This application proposes to provide marine based improvements to the damaged breakwater.

**Motion by Rob Bizzell recommends funding the projects titled “Midway Drive Boating Access Area – Replacement of Bulkhead/Breakwater” and “Cannon’s Ferry Boating Access Area -Breakwater Replacement”. Second by Tom Roller. Motion carries unanimously.**

**Lowland Marina Acquisition**

This project was submitted by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and Ben Soloman. Requested funding for the Lowland Marina Acquisition project, over a period of 17 months, is \$730,000 and \$21,100 in match is provided. This application proposes to purchase the Lowland

Marina property located in Pamlico County, near the mouth of the Pamlico River and adjacent sound. Current access to the area is through a pay-per-use ramp.

Further discussion was held on the importance of being involved in the design and implementation of the boating access project. Consultation with DMF for ongoing implementation for this project, and others like it, should be occurring. DMF should be given credit for their role in the purchase of the facility, if CRFL funds are used. Concerns over CAMA permits were discussed. The importance of access in rural areas was also maintained throughout the conversation. This could lead to future partnerships and joint projects through further development and planning.

**Motion by Rob Bizzell to recommend funding for the project titled “Lowland Marina Acquisition” as long as we are fully involved in the design of the facility, with an expense projection for completing the project, and a determination for where these funds will come from, and an update on CAMA permits. Second by Tom Roller. Motion carries unanimously.**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Tom Roller to adjourn. Second by Doug Rader.**

WB





ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

ELIZABETH S. BISER  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

April 28, 2023

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

**FROM:** William Brantley, Grants Program Manager, Administrative and Maintenance Services Section

**SUBJECT:** March 1, 2023 Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Committee Meeting

---

### Issue

The N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Funding Committee met jointly with the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Commercial Resource Fund Committee at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, through Webex to discuss their 2023 Request for Proposals (RFP).

### Findings

The joint committees discussed specific project objectives to be included in the 2023 RFP.

### Action Needed

For informational purposes only, **no action is needed at this time.**

### Attachments

- 1) Draft meeting minutes from the March 1, 2023 joint meeting



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

ELIZABETH S. BISER  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

## MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Commercial Resource Fund Committee and the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund

FROM: William Brantley, Grants Program Manager  
Division of Marine Fisheries, NCDEQ

DATE: April 5, 2023

SUBJECT: MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee and Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Meeting Minutes

The MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee and the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund met at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, through Webex. The following members attended:

MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee: Chairman Doug Cross, Mike Blanton, Ana Shellem

Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Members: Chairman Ernest Doshier, Glenn Skinner, Britton Shackelford, and Gilbert Baccus.

Absent: Doug Todd, Steve Weeks

Public Comment: No public comments were received for this meeting.

### **Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

Chairmen Ernest Doshier and Doug Cross called the meeting to order for the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund and the MFC Commercial Resource Fund Committee. William Brantley read the conflict-of-interest reminder, and no conflicts were noted by the Chairmen. Brantley conducted a roll call for both committees. Two members were absent from the Funding Committee for the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund.

The meeting agenda and minutes were reviewed.

**Motion by Ana Shellem to approve the agenda. Second by Mike Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through a roll call vote.**

**Motion by Glenn Skinner to approve the agenda. Second by Gilbert Baccus. Motion passed unanimously through a roll call vote of present members.**

**Motion by Glenn Skinner to approve the minutes from the December 8, 2022 meeting. Second by Britton Shackelford. Motion passed unanimously through a roll call vote of present members.**

**Motion by Ana Shellem approve the minutes from the December 8, 2022 meeting. Second by Mike Blanton. Motion passed unanimously through a roll call vote.**

Brantley briefed the committees on the scope of the meeting, which was to begin development of a new request for proposals from the NC Commercial Fishing Resource Fund. Project concepts would be discussed, the NC Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) would draft the document after this meeting, and the joint Committees would meet at a later date to approve the request for proposals before publication.

### **CFRF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) DEVELOPMENT**

Members asked for an option for applicants to be available for in-person discussion during final proposal reviews. Other administrative options for the RFP development included no blanketed funding limits for proposals unless specified, personnel costs would be permitted in proposals, and discussion that years of funding for proposals would not be restricted beyond the NC Department of Environmental Quality's purchasing guidelines. Proposed costs in proposals should be focused directly on the proposal, with an appropriate level of justification.

Skinner asked for discussion on a project to study the characterization of the targeted, recreational, large red drum fishery. This could include effort, abundance, size, discards, definition, bycatch, weights, mortality rates, etc. This would be for a biological characterization study, not socioeconomic. Skinner asked the Division to weigh in on the RFP language, or even consider the project itself, to make the data applicable for use down the road.

Skinner asked for an opportunity to extend the Always NC Fresh campaign with tiers of funding options / engagements; or, to extend the Fund's marketing and education campaign with annual tiers of funding / engagement options. Chairman Cross noted that the Committees needed to look at the campaign in order to substantiate the program in the future, potentially through throttling back efforts to not cripple the ability to fund other projects.

Blanton asked for a project or white paper on a blue crab abundance and/or juvenile survey design for the State of North Carolina. This would examine what an independent survey would look like for the state on an annual basis, and potential costs for the survey. It would need to include environmental parameters such as water quality impacts, variability in ecosystem fluctuations, and may include an option to be contracted out.

Collectively among both Committees, annual requests for projects to assist in water quality was discussed, specific to sustainable commercial fishing. This would be a generalized topic, with a

funding cap and matching funds requirement. Proposals should look for synergistic effects or offer a plan to chip away at water quality issues. Localized water quality assessments and impacts should also be considered. Proposals are not limited to, but may include, recommendations from the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan. Blanton asked Brantley to look at prior proposals that the Committees received that examined water quality issues. This would provide a means to determine an average cost of water quality based proposals, so the Committees could work toward a funding cap. Shellem asked for consideration in including water quality objectives in each proposal that the Committees receive, and noted that members should examine funding amounts that were spent toward public relations versus other issues facing the joint Committees.

Chairman Cross requested proposals to consider trial trawling studies, in areas above the ferry lines, to examine the benefits of trawling in the sound or rivers. Skinner stated he was in favor of the study, and noted that the NCDMF would need to weigh in if certain areas would be available for a trawling study. NC DMF Deputy Director Loeffler stated he would need to look at what had been discussed by the Marine Fisheries Commission, and stated that permits would be required for anyone conducting research. Permits would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Chairman Cross stated that the Commission had looked at two grids for studies in the Pamlico and Neuse Rivers, above the ferry lines previously, and this study may target these areas.

Skinner asked about the next steps on the Satellite Flounder Tagging Study. Deputy Director Mike Loeffler stated that the project report was being developed, and NCDMF staff continue to work with UNCW researchers for a full analysis. The timeline for report completion and understanding the next steps was estimated to be one year.

### **Issues from Committee Members**

Chairman Cross brought up aquaculture concerns, and the need for forward-thinking growth of the industry.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Mike Blanton to adjourn. Second by Ana Shellem. Motion passed unanimously through a roll call vote.**

**Motion by Gilbert Baccus to adjourn. Second by Glenn Skinner. Motion passed unanimously through roll call vote of present members.**

Meeting adjourned.

WB