

-----Original Message-----

From: J.D. Lockamy [<mailto:jdsealevelnc@cs.com>]

Sent: Monday, November 02, 2015 4:05 PM

To: Hensley, Michelle L <[Michelle.Hensley@ncdenr.gov](mailto:Michelle.Hensley@ncdenr.gov)>

Subject: Flounder Angler

Yesterday afternoon, after returning from one of my week long fishing trips to Carteret County, I watched the program "Net Effect" that was presented by WRAL.

As a recreational ANGLER who targets flounder, I feel the need to express my thoughts.

Over the years I have formed friendly relationships with many of the local folks in that area. Some are true commercial fisherman but several are folks who hold commercial licenses for their own personal use. I'm not sure the latter group falls into the intended definition of a "commercial fisherman."

If NCDMF is going to place additional limits on the commercial fisherman, I as a recreational ANGLER need to give up something as well. I have not seen any ANGLER catch a limit of flounder in the past several years. Reducing the number of flounder that may be kept by the recreational fishermen would not impact recreational ANGLER as he rarely if ever catches a limit anyway.

You may have noticed the "ANGLER" in my text above. Anecdotal evidence; what my eyes tell me, is that the only recreational fisherman who harvests their limit with any regularity are the ones who GIG flounder. These fishermen are not ANGLERS.

By all means, please do away with large mesh gill-nets, but let's also do away with recreational gigging and perhaps reduce the number of flounder that may be harvested by recreational fisherman.

I appreciated the comments of Mike Wicker in the program aired by WRAL. But at one point he made a reference to the "commercial angler." With the possible exception of some Tuna fishermen, I do not believe that there is any such thing. Please see definition of "angler."

Thanks for reading my ramblings

Regards

Jerry Lockamy

Fayetteville, NC





To: NCMFC Commissioners

Compromise has been a hard word to find from either the recreational or commercial positions of late. Ocracoke Working Watermen's Association (OWWA) fishermen are again writing you to voice our support of Proposal #5. OWWA fishermen believe that industry must help to rebuild the stock but refute suggestions from the recreational sector that commercial fishermen have no regard for the health of the stock. OWWA sent in comments during the supplement comment period to the NCDMF/NCMFC supporting Proposal #5 and has continued our support for Proposal #5 during industry discussions. Proposal #5 will put in place significant catch reduction that will provide substantial conservation benefits to the stock until the NCDMF can complete a coast wide stock assessment.

OWWA fishermen are very concerned the supplement is being used to create a de facto amendment without the checks and balances the amendment process dictates. Without NCDMF guidance on when a coast wide stock assessment could be completed, the management measures that are incorporated into the supplement may or may not be short term. That is not the intent of the supplement process. Furthermore, NCDMF not providing the NCMFC a management position has opened the door to management by opinion rather than science. Southern flounder management should to be grounded in a stock assessment with recommendations from the NCDMF. What we have now is 9 Commissioners crafting management measures that reflect their personal opinion and bias towards fishery management. To the best of our knowledge, not one Commissioner is a southern flounder biologist or has any expertise in managing southern flounder.

OWWA fishermen do not support Proposals #1 and #2 because they implement long term management restrictions that should be vetted through the amendment process and outright prohibit gear without the opportunity to debate the matter. For example: A TAC is traditionally developed after all sectors have debated control dates, geographical boundaries, stock biomass status and how much the TAC should be. None of that has happened and stock biomass is unknown. OWWA fishermen are willing to make sacrifices on behalf of the resource but resent having our livelihood parceled back to us or outright outlawed based on conjecture and incomplete stock data.

OWWA fishermen support Proposal #5 because: (1) 15 inch size limit will allow significantly more fish the opportunity to spawn. (2) Pound net panel modification to 5 ¾ inch will release undersized fish, reduce harvest, increase escapement because it will release a fish larger than 15 inches and retain important bycatch like pompano and star butterfly. (3) Increasing gillnet minimum size to 5 ¾ inch will reduce bycatch mortality and harvest. The NCDMF estimated Proposal #5 will generate at least 18% reduction but is likely higher due to the conservative estimates used in NCDMF supplement information. Also, CPUE data that reflects lower effort with stable catches is not being taken into account.

Additionally, it would be catastrophic to Ocracoke Seafood Company and its fishermen if the NCMFC were to close the fishery prematurely before Dec. 1. Our season lasts about 8 weeks in best of years but weather events like this year have made the season very short. Years like this provide significant escapement but does not get quantified.

All sectors are never going to see eye to eye on management but it is the NCMFC's job to rise above the fray and provide balanced management that reflects all sectors input. There is no other species more economically important to the survival of Ocracoke Seafood Company and its fishermen. We urge all Commissioners to strive to find common ground during the MFC meeting rather than differences. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and give input before this very important meeting.

Regards,  
Hardy Plyler

Hardy Plyler  
Vince O'Neal  
Bill Evans  
Farris O'Neal  
David Hilton  
Ernest Dosier  
Erick O'Neal  
Rex O'Neal  
James B. Gaskill  
Morty Gaskill  
Wade Austin  
Steve Wilson  
Jesse Spencer  
Danny Worsley  
Andy O'Neal  
John Ferrara  
Jerry Lukefahr  
Donny McCann  
Gene Ballance  
Rodney Mason  
Fletcher O'Neal  
David O'Neal  
Lewis O'Neal  
Bill Jemison  
Jette Carr  
Earl Gaskins  
Beaver Tillett  
Wayne Teeter  
John Paul  
Monroe Gaskill  
Robbie Lewis  
Arlene Burleigh  
Jimmy O'Neal  
Jarrett Moore  
Ikey O'Neal  
Bret Evans  
Eddie O'Neal  
R.T. O'Neal  
Albert O'Neal  
Dan Garrish  
Reid Robinson

O.W.W.A.  
P.O. Box 1165  
416 Irvin Garrish Hwy.  
Ocracoke, NC  
27960

info@ocracokewatermen.org





## **North Carolina Wildlife Federation**

*Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation*

1346 St. Julien St .  
Charlotte, NC 28205  
(704) 332-5696

1024 Washington St.  
Raleigh, NC 27605  
(919) 833-1923

November 11, 2015

Dear Chairman Corbett,

On behalf of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation (NCWF), and its 20,000 plus members, and additional 70,000 supporters and constituents in our wildlife network, I am writing to applaud you for taking up the Southern Flounder Supplement first on the agenda at the November Marine Fisheries Commission's (MFC) meeting. We realize this process has been controversial and overwrought with politics. NCWF supports the supplement process and the ability of the commission to exert its regulatory authority to make appropriate decisions that it sees fit to adequately protect a fishery in crisis.

NCWF is, however, very disappointed that the MFC did not meet in time to protect the southern flounder stock starting this fall fishing season. Inaction has therefore jeopardized the fishery even further and thus will require a greater reduction of catch for next season to ensure sustainability of the species in North Carolina.

Based on data analysis and conversations with scientists and experts in fisheries management, NCWF is recommending a suite of measures to protect and sustain the southern flounder. These recommendations emerge out of our prior recommendations to the MFC. Our current recommendations now include consideration of a commercial Total Allowable Catch (TAC) component. NCWF believes for this fishery to sustain itself, the level of commercial catch must be significantly reduced and the level of catch must be accountable and transparent. A TAC allows this to occur. In addition, requiring a TAC at this time will allow MFC and the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) time to prepare and implement the TAC for the next season in 2016.

NCWF believes the TAC should be no less than 50% of the latest five-year average catch of southern flounder. This reduction is commensurate with the 40% catch reduction recommended by most scientists and experts plus an additional 10% to compensate for the lack of any reduction in catch for 2015. NCWF believes this level of reduction is fair and scientifically justifiable. Further, to ensure no catch overage issues, the Director should proclaim the fishery closed within 48 hours of the TAC reaching 90% of its cap.

NCWF continues to call for an increase in minimum size for commercial catch to 15 inches, as it currently is in the recreational sector. Further, NCWF believes it is time to prohibit the use of large mesh gill nets in the taking and possession of flounder in internal waters. The methods of pound netting and gigging, which allow targeting specific species and size of fish with minimum by-catch mortality, should be allowed to continue as commercial methods of harvesting southern flounder. Prohibition of large mesh gill nets to catch flounder at this time will allow gill netters to transition to these sustainable fishing methods and gear. The use of large mesh gill nets to

catch flounder has cost the state of North Carolina too much in terms of economic and social costs, agency credibility and public perception, and most importantly, sustainability of the southern flounder fishery.

NCWF appreciates the gravity of your decision, and supports MFC's full use of its regulatory authority to satisfactorily address the decline in our southern flounder fishery. This MFC has an obligation to all of the people of North Carolina to employ its decision-making powers in the best interest of the marine fisheries resource. NCWF trusts the commission will fulfill its obligation. We look forward to working with MFC to protect this critical natural resource for all of North Carolina.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Gestwicki". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tim Gestwicki  
CEO—NC Wildlife Federation

CC: Governor Pat McCrory  
Secretary Donald van der Vaart  
Director Dr. Louis Daniel

COMMENTS ON NC MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION MEMBERS' SOUTHERN FLOUNDER SUPPLEMENT PROPOSALS

Stanley M. Warlen

Newport, NC

My name is Dr. Stanley M. Warlen. I have lived in Carteret County since 1965 and during that time spent over 33 years employed as a Fishery Research Biologist with the NOAA , National Marine Fisheries Service Laboratory in Beaufort, NC studying fish and fisheries in North Carolina. I am now retired.

I firmly believe that any fishery regulations or changes therein should be based on the best scientific data and evidence collected through careful research. Any proposals should be subjected to an extensive peer review process to ensure scientific accuracy and compliance with all applicable law.

Since it appears that there is no evidence that the southern flounder stock is in danger of being overfished, then why is there even one proposal to limit catch by commercial or recreational interests. If the state of NC had any evidence that the southern flounder stock is in danger wouldn't it have brought it forward by now? The Atlantic coast population of southern flounder is a single stock extending from NC to Florida. To fully understand the population dynamics of this species it would be necessary to conduct research throughout its entire geographic range. That is to say, conduct a coast-wide stock assessment study. A stock assessment study on only a portion of the population cannot be indicative of the stock status in the entire population. We must know what is happening in the total population in order to better know what is happening in one portion.

Mortality of marine fishes is commonly thought of as either human caused mortality (i.e. fishing mortality) or all other mortality (i.e. natural mortality). Either type results in a reduction in the number of fish in a population. Estimating either type is a very difficult job requiring considerable time, money and expertise. Natural mortality starts early in the life history (e.g. egg and larval stages) and continues throughout the life span of the species. So if we are to know changes in the number of fish in a population, then we need to know the contribution of each type of mortality on the population. As difficult as it is to ascertain fishing mortality in a species, such knowledge is only one piece of the puzzle of changes in fish numbers. It is not reasonable or even the least bit accurate to ascribe changes in fish population numbers or age and size features to one type of mortality or the other without good estimates of both types of mortality.

Until we know what is the contribution of each mortality in the population of southern flounder we should not forge ahead and put the entire burden or blame on the backs of commercial and recreational fishermen. Therefore, I implore you to await further fishery research on stock assessment and population dynamics of southern flounder before making any changes to the NC Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan. The livelihoods of fishermen, processors and retailers are at stake and the access to this valuable seafood resource for consumers should not be limited.





**From:** Chris McCaffity [<mailto:freefish7@hotmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, November 09, 2015 7:40 AM  
**To:** Fish, Nancy <[nancy.fish@ncdenr.gov](mailto:nancy.fish@ncdenr.gov)>  
**Cc:** Rep. Pat McElraft <[Pat.McElraft@ncleg.net](mailto:Pat.McElraft@ncleg.net)>; Senator Norman Sanderson <[Norman.Sanderson@ncleg.net](mailto:Norman.Sanderson@ncleg.net)>; Walker, Steven <[steven.walker@nc.gov](mailto:steven.walker@nc.gov)>; Rep. Bob Steinburg <[Bob.Steinburg@ncleg.net](mailto:Bob.Steinburg@ncleg.net)>; [joshua.bowlen@mail.house.gov](mailto:joshua.bowlen@mail.house.gov); [wills\\_denton@burr.senate.gov](mailto:wills_denton@burr.senate.gov); [joe\\_nolan@tillis.senate.gov](mailto:joe_nolan@tillis.senate.gov); Feldman, Crystal M <[crystal.feldman@ncdenr.gov](mailto:crystal.feldman@ncdenr.gov)>; [HouseE-mail@ncleg.net](mailto:HouseE-mail@ncleg.net); [SenateE-mail@ncleg.net](mailto:SenateE-mail@ncleg.net); [lockwood@thenewstimes.com](mailto:lockwood@thenewstimes.com)  
**Subject:** November 2015 NCMFC Meeting Public Comments

## November 2015 NCMFC Meeting Public Comments

Hatcheries and habitat enhancement can be the perfect blend of aquaculture and wild-caught seafood that lives free and self-sufficient until harvested. Please support these proven solutions that would create more recreational opportunity and seafood while generating more revenue and protecting our fisheries for future generations. It is time to start focusing more on enhancing our fisheries and food supply than restricting our freedom to access them.

Is there another solution that would benefit EVERYONE and our marine resources?

Sincerely,

Chris McCaffity

[freefish7@hotmail.com](mailto:freefish7@hotmail.com)