



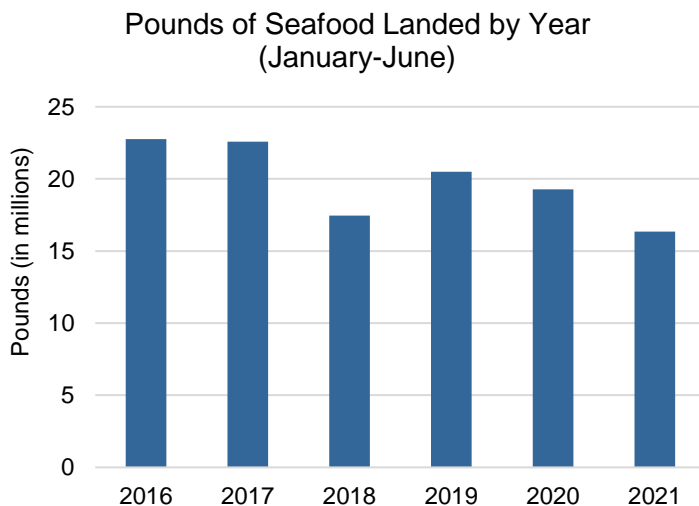
# Fish Dealer Report

License & Statistics Section, PO Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557

November 2021

## 2021 COMMERCIAL LANDINGS REVIEW

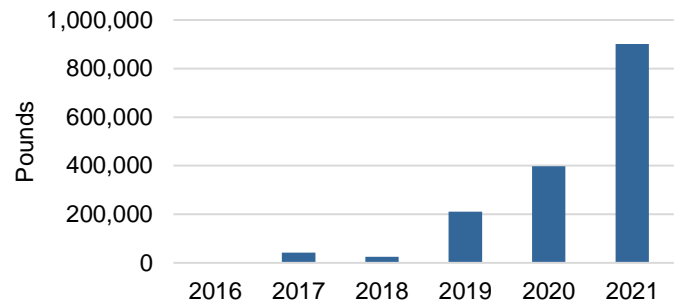
Preliminary data collected by the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) reveals that fishermen landed 16.4 million pounds of seafood from January to June 2021. This was a 20% decrease from the previous 5-year average for the same time period.



The top five species landed were Hard Blue Crab (3.1 million pounds), Shrimp (2.6 million pounds), Catfishes (1.2 million pounds), Summer Flounder (1.1 million pounds), and Atlantic Cutlassfish (Ribbonfish) (901,584 pounds).

Atlantic Cutlassfish (Ribbonfish) and Spotted Seatrout landings continued to increase dramatically as compared to the previous 5-year average, by 567% and 292% respectively. In contrast, Spiny Dogfish showed an 89% decrease in landings, as compared to the 5-year average, dropping to just over 130,000 pounds, well below the 5-year average of 1.2 million.

Pounds of Atlantic Cutlassfish (Ribbonfish) Landed by Year (January-June)



## NORTH CAROLINA CARES ACT FISHERIES RELIEF PROGRAMS

In May 2020, North Carolina received \$5.4 million of CARES Act funds to distribute to qualified applicants, which included commercial fishermen, aquaculture operations, seafood dealers and processors, and participants in the for-hire industry. To qualify, an applicant must have been a North Carolina resident who demonstrated a greater than 35% reduction in revenue during the March to May 2020 period as compared to the average of the previous five years for the same time period. Checks were distributed to approved applicants in April 2021.

In March 2021, North Carolina received an additional \$4.6 million through the Consolidated Appropriations Act. The eligibility requirements remained the same as those from the original CARES Act, but the time period was shifted to include all months from March to December to cover all potential 2020 losses related to COVID-19. In order to distribute funds more quickly, commercial fishermen and seafood dealers were pre-qualified based on the estimated ex-vessel values of landings reported in their NCDMF trip tickets and were given the option of using those NCDMF values or providing their own revenue documentation. The open application period closed on October 1, 2021, and NCDMF staff are currently reviewing applications. Checks are expected to be mailed to

approved applicants by Spring 2022. If you have any questions about the NC CARES Act Fisheries Relief Programs, email [covid19relief@ncdenr.gov](mailto:covid19relief@ncdenr.gov) or call NCDMF staff in Morehead City, NC at (252) 503-3091 or 1-800-682-2632 (toll-free in North Carolina only).

## **FEDERAL HURRICANE FLORENCE FISHERIES RELIEF PROGRAM**

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Hurricane Florence made landfall in September 2018 and had a devastating impact on the fishing industry. Following a request from Governor Cooper, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) conducted a fisheries damage assessment and concluded that North Carolina will be eligible to distribute \$7.7 million in federal assistance funds to seafood dealers and processors, pier owners, for-hire businesses, and bait-and-tackle shops.

The Division submitted the first version of the proposed spending plan in the summer of 2020 and has worked with federal government reviewers to make requested amendments. NCDMF submitted a final version of the spending plan in August 2021 and is currently awaiting more information from NMFS on a timeline for the availability of these funds. Once the plan receives final approval, the funds will be released to NCDMF to start an application process and distribute the funds to eligible applicants. All updates regarding this program will be shared through press releases from the Division. To automatically receive press releases, sign up here: <https://deq.nc.gov/sign-ncdeq-press-releases>.

## **STAFF CHANGES**

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The Trip Ticket Program recently welcomed our new Data Control Clerk Bridget Mendelson, who will assist with entering and verifying trip tickets. Over the last six months, we have also had some staff move to new roles within the Trip Ticket Program. Willow Patten has transitioned from the assistant Quota Monitoring Biologist to a permanent position as the lead Quota Monitoring Biologist ([Willow.Patten@ncdenr.gov](mailto:Willow.Patten@ncdenr.gov), 252-904-7810). In this role, Willow is also the primary contact for NC Trip Ticket System software technical support. CARES Act biologist Michael Thompson ([Michael.Thompson@ncdenr.gov](mailto:Michael.Thompson@ncdenr.gov),

252-269-1847) has replaced Meredith Whitten as the Port Agent Supervisor, and Meredith is now the program Data Analyst ([Meredith.Whitten@ncdenr.gov](mailto:Meredith.Whitten@ncdenr.gov), 252-515-6690). Economist David Dietz left the section for a new job opportunity, and this position will be filled soon.

## **UPCOMING FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REMINDERS**

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The Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) plans to select preferred management for Draft Amendment 2 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP) at the next quarterly business meeting, November 17-19, 2021. Public comment for the MFC November business meeting will be held November 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. After this meeting, the plan will go to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Secretary, Elizabeth Biser, and NC legislative committees for additional review. As part of the FMP development process, NCDMF held five Advisory Committee (AC) meetings and provided an opportunity for public comment in June 2021. The MFC will likely vote on final adoption of the plan in 2022.

At the November meeting, the MFC will also review Draft Amendment 3 to the Southern Flounder FMP to vote to send it out for AC and public review. The AC meetings and public comment period will occur in January 2022.

Public comment periods are open to everyone and are an integral aspect of the FMP process. The public may provide comments by signing up to speak at an AC meeting or by submitting online or written comments. If you would like to be notified of all public comment periods through press releases, sign up online at <https://deq.nc.gov/sign-ncdeq-press-releases>.

## **RULE UPDATES**

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After foreign crab meat was fraudulently marketed and sold as domestic Blue Crab in NC, the MFC began rulemaking to prohibit the repacking of foreign crab meat in the state to prevent future fraud and improve consumer confidence. The rules will be presented for final approval at the November 2021 MFC business meeting.

The public comment period is currently open through 5 p.m. November 30, 2021 for proposed changes to a rule

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pertaining to dealer recordkeeping requirements (15A NCAC 03I .0114), as well as 108 other unrelated rules. Currently, fish dealers must make paper copies of trip tickets available for inspection at the dealer location, but this proposed change would allow fish dealers to have either paper or electronic copies. A second proposed change specifies that documentation must show the species in addition to the quantity of fish to better identify the stock of a dealer and prevent errors.

The public may submit written comments online (<https://forms.office.com/g/pKMdBYa27y>) or through the mail to NC Marine Fisheries Commission Rules Comments, P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC, 28557. Comments must be received by NCDMF by 5 p.m. November 30, 2021. Links to the proposed rules and other supporting information can also be found online. The proposed rule changes will be presented to the MFC for final approval in February 2022.

## TRIP TICKET REMINDERS

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**Transaction Numbers:** Trip Tickets include a field for “Transaction #” or “Trans #,” and there has been some confusion about what this field means. The transaction number is used when multiple trip tickets are written for fish caught on a single trip. The transaction number is basically a way of counting the number of tickets written out for a particular trip to avoid counting a single trip multiple times when NCDMF compiles landings data.

An example of this includes when a fisherman harvests crabs and finfish in the same trip and sells the crabs at one dealer and the finfish at a second dealer. In that situation, the first dealer should complete a trip ticket for the shellfish with a transaction number of 1, but the second dealer should complete a trip ticket for the finfish with a transaction number of 2. Another example would be if a crew of two licensed commercial fishermen were working together to fish a gillnet and caught 100 pounds of fish that they split in half to sell to the dealer individually, then the first ticket written to the first fisherman would be transaction number 1 with 50 pounds, and the second ticket for the second fisherman would be transaction number 2 with the remaining 50 pounds.

When the Trip Ticket Program counts the number of trips for a particular species or gear type, only the trips with a transaction number of 1 are counted as individual trips. In this example, both fishermen would receive full credit for their landings, but because the second transaction number was entered as a 2, the Trip Ticket Program would not overestimate the number of trips and effort in the gillnet fishery.

**Crew Numbers:** Although each trip ticket is only assigned to one commercial fishing license, fishing trips often include more than one fisherman. To capture this information, the number of people in the crew for that trip should be written in the “No. of Crew” box on paper trip tickets or the “# Crew” box in the software. Accurately recording the crew size helps the Trip Ticket Program and NCDMF understand how many individuals participate in each respective fishery and could be impacted by management decisions. It also helps NCDMF to estimate the value of commercial fisheries to local economies.

**Trip Tickets:** Finally, when filling out paper trip tickets, please take steps to ensure that the data are transferred onto the additional carbon copies in the trip ticket booklets. Newer trip tickets require you to press harder than before when writing, and the use of a ball point pen will help ensure the data transfers between sheets. Also, please remember to give fishermen a copy of their trip tickets, even if reporting electronically. E-dealers can print out copies of the trip tickets for fishermen or provide them with handwritten dock tickets. Providing fishermen with their tickets helps them tremendously when applying for economic assistance programs through NCDMF.

## TECHNICAL UPDATES

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**VESL:** The Trip Ticket Program also continues to work with Bluefin Data, LLC and the North Carolina Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) to implement VESL. VESL is a web-based version of the NC Trip Ticket System software that can be used on mobile devices and will allow for greater flexibility to account for changing reporting requirements.

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## TECH TIPS

Occasionally, the NC Trip Ticket System software is updated to add new features or modify existing ones. These updates often make the software easier to navigate, but they also make important changes to how things such as species, gear, and disposition must be recorded in trip tickets. Because of this, it is important for seafood dealers to make sure they are using the most up-to-date version of the software.

Dealers can tell if they are using an outdated version of the NC Trip Ticket System software by clicking the **"CHECK FOR UPDATES"** button that appears in the lower, right-hand corner of the screen when the program is first opened. If the software needs to be updated, a notification will pop up, saying that an update is available. Click **"UPDATE"** if this notification appears. Close out of the program and reopen it. The software will be updated to the latest version. Confirm the update by checking the version number, displayed in the top left corner of the program screen. If the most recent version of the software is being used, it will say "North Carolina Trip Ticket System – ver. 7.0.32".

## TRIP TICKET CONTACTS

For questions regarding rules, procedures, or requirements, please contact a port agent at your local NCDMF office.

Elizabeth City	Chris Kelly	252-337-5362 (office/cell) <a href="mailto:Chris.Kelly@ncdenr.gov">Chris.Kelly@ncdenr.gov</a>
Manteo	Marty Brill	252-342-0156 (cell) 252-473-2158 (office) <a href="mailto:Martin.Brill@ncdenr.gov">Martin.Brill@ncdenr.gov</a>
Morehead City	Chuck Davis	252-808-7935 (cell) 252-808-8029 (office) <a href="mailto:Chuck.Davis@ncdenr.gov">Chuck.Davis@ncdenr.gov</a>
Washington	Jon Anglemyer	252-908-6786 (office/cell) <a href="mailto:Jon.Anglemyer@ncdenr.gov">Jon.Anglemyer@ncdenr.gov</a>
Wilmington	Pam Zuaboni	252-241-0118 (cell) 910-796-7216 (office) <a href="mailto:Pam.Zuaboni@ncdenr.gov">Pam.Zuaboni@ncdenr.gov</a>

For supplies, please contact our data clerks at 252-808-8104.

If you have any questions regarding use of the NC Trip Ticket System software, please contact Willow Patten at [Willow.Patten@ncdenr.gov](mailto:Willow.Patten@ncdenr.gov) or call 252-904-7810.

## UPCOMING NC MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION MEETING

November 17-19, 2021

The public may access the meeting virtually. Please visit the [MFC webpage](#) for updates and details.

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## REPORT CRAB KILLS

**Why?** Fishermen are often the first to see dead or dying crabs. Such events may occur due to weather or human-induced causes. Water quality conditions that can contribute to crab kills include low dissolved oxygen, rapid salinity change and elevated levels of pesticides in the water. Distress or mortality of peeler crabs in shedders can be an early sign of water quality problems. Rapid reporting of kills helps state agencies determine the cause and how to prevent them in the future.

**What to look for:** Blue crabs exposed to pesticides may exhibit unusual behavior, such as difficulty moving (flipping over, legs falling off) prior to dying. Crabs stressed by low oxygen or extreme changes in temperature or salinity are more likely to become inactive.



**What to do:** Immediately report crab or fish kills when observed at your shedder or on the water. Calls may be anonymous. When abnormal behavior is observed, freeze several crabs and collect water samples. Store the water sample in a clean jar or bag and keep cold.

**Who to contact:**

Weekdays: N.C. Department of Environmental Quality  
Washington Office: 252-946-6481; 800-338-7804  
Wilmington Office: 910-796-7215; 800-248-4536

Weekends/evening: **Environmental Emergency hotline: 800-858-0368**

