



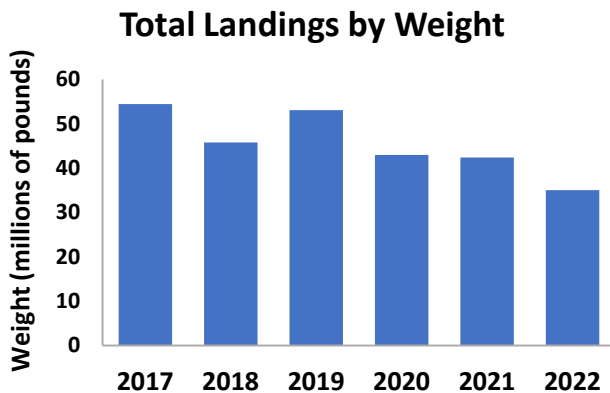
Fish Dealer Report

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

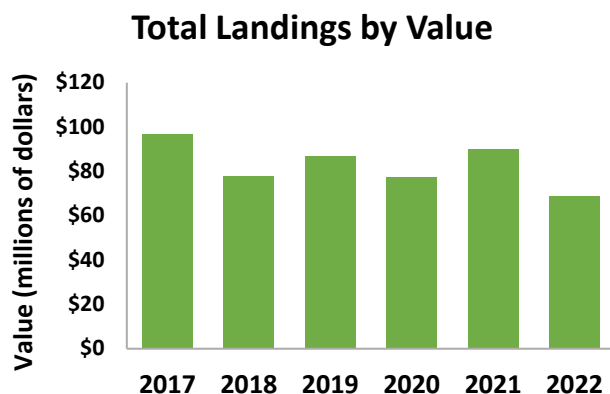
July 2023

2022 COMMERCIAL LANDINGS REVIEW

Commercial fishermen landed 35.1 million pounds of seafood in North Carolina in 2022. This was a 17.3% decrease from the 2021 landings of 42.4 million pounds and a 26.6% decrease from the five-year average (2017-2021) of 47.7 million pounds.



The estimated value for landings in 2022 was \$68.8 million, a decrease of 23.4% from the 2021 estimated value of \$89.8 million and a decrease of 19.7% from the five-year average of \$85.7 million.



The top five species landed by weight were Blue Crab (hard crabs only), 9.1 million pounds; Shrimp, 4.8 million pounds; Striped Mullet, 2.7 million pounds; Catfishes, 2.5 million pounds; and Summer Flounder, 2.2 million pounds. The top five species landed by value were Blue Crab (hard crabs only), \$13.5 million; Shrimp, \$10.1 million; Eastern Oyster, \$6.7 million; Summer Flounder, \$5.0 million; and Bigeye Tuna, \$3.9 million.

Oyster aquaculture is a growing industry in North Carolina. Oyster landings (meat weight) from leases in 2022 totaled 864,483 pounds, a 40% increase compared to the previous 5-year average of 617,688 pounds. Not only are lease landings increasing, they are starting to account for more of the total oyster landings. The 864,483 pounds of oyster landed from leases accounts for 76% of the 1.1 million total pounds landed in 2022. In 2017, the first year lease landings surpassed public-bottom landings, lease landings accounted for 57% of the total oyster landings. In each of the years since 2017, lease landings have accounted for 68, 73, 73, 79 and 76% of total landings, respectively. While total oyster landings are increasing, lease landings appear to be driving this change.

There has also been a shift in gill net usage, from anchored gill nets to actively-fished gill nets (drift and run around). Anchored gill net trips have decreased 38.9% as compared to the previous 5-year average, whereas drift net and run around net landings have increased 130.7% and 91.4%, respectively. The average number of anchored gill net trips from 2017 to 2021 was 19,176. During the same time, the average number of active-fished net trips was only 6,331 trips. In 2022, however, there were only 11,721 anchored gill net trips compared to 12,423 actively-fished net trips.

Values in this report are summarized. To see actual 2022 landings and value, please see the [2022 Annual Landings Bulletin](#).

STAFF CHANGES

The License and Statistics Section welcomed quite a few new additions this year, including a License Program Manager, Chearin Lewis (Chearin.Lewis@deq.nc.gov, 252-808-8103). Additionally, The Socio-Economics Program hired Assistant Economist Grant Tyler (Grant.Tyler@deq.nc.gov, 252-503-3091). The Coastal Angling Program hired Program Coordinator Jeff Moore (Jeff.N.Moore@deq.nc.gov, 252-808-8101). The License Program hired two License Clerks, Faith Watkins (Faith.Watkins@deq.nc.gov, 252-473-5734) and Denise Landino (Denise.Landino@deq.nc.gov, 252-473-5734). In the Trip Ticket Program (TTP), Marisa Ponte (Marisa.Ponte@deq.nc.gov, 252-808-8109), moved from Assistant Quota Monitoring Biologist to head Quota Monitoring Biologist. Commercial Port Agent Capt. Marty Brill retired from the Division after 20 years of dedicated service. His position in the Manteo office was filled by Haley Clinton (Haley.Clinton@deq.nc.gov, 252-342-0156) in January 2023.

Additionally, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) staff are working to fill vacant positions for an Assistant Quota Monitoring Biologist, a Trip Ticket Data Analyst and a Recreational Data Analyst.

RECENT MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION DECISIONS

In May 2023, the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission (NCMFC) voted for final adoption of Supplement A to Amendment 1 of the Striped Mullet Fishery Management Plan. This supplement approved season closures from November 7 to December 31 North of the Highway 58 Bridge, and November 10 to December 31 South of the Highway 58 Bridge. These season closures will be implemented by proclamation and remain in place until adoption of Amendment 2. For more information, view the [press release](#). You can also contact Dan Zapf (Daniel.Zapf@deq.nc.gov, 252-948-3874), Jeff Dobbs (Jeffrey.Dobbs@deq.nc.gov, 252-808-8193), or Willow Patten (Willow.Patten@deq.nc.gov, 252-948-3884).

Additionally, NCDMF updated the approved device list for crab pots used in Diamondback Terrapin Management

Areas. The updates will be effective in 2024 and will include the industry-designed narrow funnel design (NFD) device. Cooperative research between crabbers, researchers, and NCDMF showed the NFD successfully excludes diamondback terrapins more than other approved devices while retaining blue crabs. This device decreases cost as it is built into the pots and uses less materials than a typical pot funnel. For questions about the NFD, please contact Joe Facendola at Joe.Facendola@deq.nc.gov or call 910-796-729.

RULE UPDATES

The NCMFC began the formal rulemaking process for a group of 85 rules pertaining to commercial shellfish sanitation and processing procedures. Included in this rules package are five rules in support of “Data Collection and Harassment Prevention for the Conservation of Marine and Estuarine Resources.” Full details of these proposed rules will be published in the N.C. Register on Aug. 1, 2023, and a news release will be sent out announcing the beginning of a 60-day public comment period (including one public hearing).

Remember to check the Commission’s Rules [webpage](#) for the latest copy of the rules. You can also find information about the Commission’s proposed rules and [sign up](#) to receive electronic notification of public comment opportunities for rulemaking and when rules become effective. Per North Carolina General Statute § 113-221, all persons who may be affected by rules adopted by the Marine Fisheries Commission are under a duty to keep themselves informed of the current rules.

TRIP TICKET REMINDERS

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.

The Division of Marine Fisheries is dedicated to ensuring sustainable marine and estuarine fisheries and habitats for the benefit and health of the people of North Carolina.

For example, 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, the first dealer should complete a trip ticket for the crabs 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 is if a crew of two licensed commercial fishermen were working together to fish a gill net 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 show transaction number 1 with 50 pounds, and the second ticket for the second fisherman would show transaction number 2 with the remaining 50 pounds.

When the TTP 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 TTP would not overestimate the number of trips and effort in the gill-net fishery.

Gill Nets: It is important to verify the type of gill net fished with fisherman and record the information correctly on the trip ticket. The TTP currently has five gear codes for gill nets: drift gill net (470); runaround gill net (475); anchored small-mesh gill net (426); anchored large-mesh gill net (427), and trammel net (530). Drift gill nets (470) are defined as nets used to capture fish while being moved along by water current and the net is being actively fished and attended from deployment through retrieval. Run-around gill nets (475) are defined as nets that are set and then immediately retrieved. Strike and drop nets are also defined nets that are set and then immediately retrieved and should be recorded as run-around gill net (475) trips. Anchored gill nets, also known as fixed or stationary gill nets, are defined as nets anchored or staked to the bottom, or some structure attached to the bottom, on both ends. While all gill nets have large and small mesh sizes, anchored gill nets are the only type defined by mesh size on trip tickets. On paper tickets, anchored small mesh gill nets (426) are designated as either "< 5 in." or "SM" and anchored large mesh gill nets (427) are designated as either ">= 5 in." or "LM."

It is the responsibility of the fisherman to inform the dealer of their fishing activity, but it is the dealer's responsibility to make sure trip tickets are filled out correctly. Failure to do so can directly impact businesses as these data are used for items such as management decisions and relief programs.

CONVERSION FACTOR PROJECT

The TTP is continuing its project to update conversion factors, which are values used to convert landed units (gutted, headed, bushel, etc.) into whole weight for finfish and meat weight for shellfish. TTP staff have been collecting samples of Snowy Grouper, Atlantic Menhaden, Blue Crab, and other species to determine current processed-to-whole weight conversion factors. The commercial fishing industry has greatly assisted the NCDMF with this project.

The NCDMF is seeking help from dealers who would allow TTP staff to collect measurements for this project at their fish houses. If you have questions about the Conversion Factor Project or have interest in providing sampling opportunities, please contact Lily Zeller at Lily.Zeller@deq.nc.gov or call 252-725-2667.

TECH TIPS

Occasionally, dealers will purchase product landed at another dealer's location. In these instances, both dealers should fill out a trip ticket, as the dealer purchasing the product is required to report federally, and the dealer landing the product is required to report to the state. To prevent duplicate data, however, the dealer purchasing the product will select the box labeled "Purchased Only," and the dealer landing the product will select the box labeled "Packed Out Only." The "Purchased Only" selection will only submit the trip ticket information to the National Marine Fisheries Service (if it is a federally-permitted species) and the "Packed Out Only" selection will only submit the trip ticket information to the state. If you leave both boxes blank, it will default to selecting both options, and the trip ticket information will be sent to both entities.

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TECH UPDATES

The TTP recently deactivated certain species codes to improve the accuracy of landings data. Deactivated codes include those with uncommon or no longer used conditions and some 'mixed' count/size grades. If you cannot find a particular species name in the Species Description options, ask the fisherman you are buying from if it goes by any other names. If still unable to find it, contact your port agent for assistance.

Currently, the NC Trip Ticket software program only allows dealers to report on one computer running Microsoft Windows with an internet connection. The TTP has been working with Bluefin Data, LLC. to expand electronic reporting capabilities with a new online reporting application, VESL. This will allow seafood dealers to report using any internet-capable device, rather than being tied to one Windows computer. VESL is expected to be released to dealers state-wide later this year.

TRIP TICKET CONTACTS

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

Elizabeth City	Alexis Rakestraw	252-337-5362 (cell) Alexis.Rakestraw@deq.nc.gov
Manteo	Haley Clinton	252-342-0156 (cell) 252-473-2158 (office) Haley.Clinton@deq.nc.gov
Morehead City	Chuck Davis	252-808-7935 (cell) 252-808-8029 (office) Chuck.Davis@deq.nc.gov
Washington	Jon Anglemyer	252-908-6786 (office/cell) Jon.Anglemyer@deq.nc.gov
Wilmington	Pam Zuaboni*	252-241-0118 (cell) 910-796-7216 (office) Pam.Zuaboni@deq.nc.gov

For supplies, please contact a data clerk at 252-808-8104.

If you have any questions regarding use of the NC Trip Ticket System software, contact Marisa Ponte at Marisa.Ponte@deq.nc.gov or call 252-808-8109.

If you are interested in accessing commercial fisheries data or would like to request a summary of your trip ticket landings, contact Meredith Whitten at Meredith.Whitten@deq.nc.gov or call 252-808-8020.

If your Port Agent is Pam Zuaboni and you have questions, until further notice, contact Michael Thompson at Michael.Thompson@deq.nc.gov or call 252-808-8095.

UPCOMING NC MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION MEETING

August 23-25, 2023

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

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Observer Trip Scheduling System (OTSS)

Testing Fall 2023 / Full Rollout Fall 2024

**Do you fish anchored* gill nets in the sound and rivers?
If so, this is important!**

To meet the requirements of the Federally issued Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) for interactions with sea turtles and Atlantic Sturgeon in the estuarine anchored gill-net fishery, the NC Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) must obtain 7-10% observer coverage of large-mesh and 1-2% observer coverage of small-mesh gill-net trips. All participants in these fisheries must hold an Estuarine Gill Net Permit (EGNP). A condition of this permit requires that fishermen allow the DMF to observe fishing trips when requested. To help schedule trips for observation and to ensure compliance with the Federal permits, the DMF is developing a call-in system, the Observer Trip Scheduling System (OTSS).



Step 1

Fishermen call OTSS weekly to report NEXT week's planned fishing activity



Step 2



Computer randomly selects fishermen to be observed

Step 3

OTSS alerts fishermen if they are selected to be observed or not



Step 4



Selected fisherman calls assigned observer to schedule trip(s)

*Anchored, set, fixed, stationary nets. Excludes drift and runaround gill nets.

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**

