



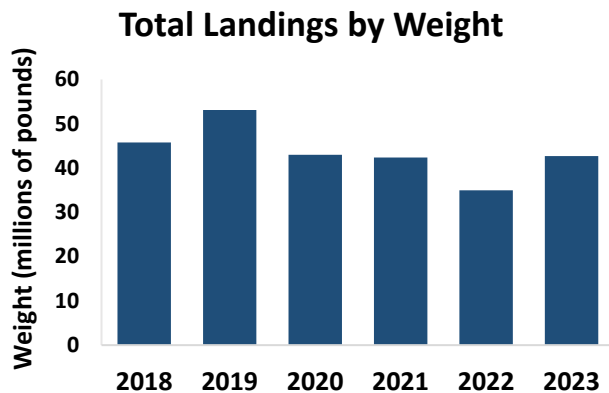
# Fish Dealer Report

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

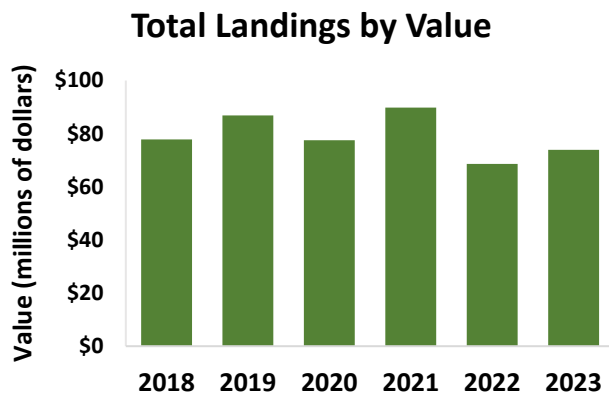
May 2024

## 2023 COMMERCIAL LANDINGS REVIEW

Commercial fishermen landed 42.7 million pounds of seafood in North Carolina in 2023. This was a 22.1% increase from the 2022 landings of 35.0 million pounds and a 2.6% decrease from the five-year average (2018-2022) of 43.8 million pounds.



The estimated value for landings in 2023 was \$73.9 million, an increase of 7.8% from the 2022 estimated value of \$68.6 million and a decrease of 7.7% from the five-year average of \$80.1 million.



The top five species landed by weight were Blue Crab (hard crabs only), 15.3 million pounds; Shrimp, 6.6 million pounds; Catfishes, 2.2 million pounds; Summer Flounder, 2.1 million pounds; and Striped Mullet, 1.9 million pounds. The top five species landed by value were Blue Crab (hard crabs only), \$18.2 million; Shrimp, \$14.1 million; Eastern Oyster, \$7.0 million; Summer Flounder, \$3.4 million; and Bigeye Tuna, \$3.4 million.

A number of species demonstrated significant increases in both landings and value in 2023, including Sheepshead, White Perch and Black Drum. Sheepshead landings and value both increased more than 65% compared to 2022 statistics. Compared to the previous five-year average, landings of Sheepshead increased 40.6% and value increased 72%. Similarly, 2023 White Perch and Black Drum landings and values each more than doubled compared to their respective five-year averages. These two species in particular have demonstrated a consistent increase in landings since 2018. Additionally, Hard Blue Crab had their highest landings since 2019, and are up 5% compared to the previous five-year average. However, the 2023 value does not reflect this trend, as it was down 1.9% compared to the previous five-year average. Both 2020 and 2021 showed higher values than 2023, despite each having less landings than 2023.

Atlantic Croaker landings and value, on the other hand, have shown consistent decreases since 2018. Atlantic Croaker landings and value were both down ~30% compared to 2022, and down ~70% compared to their five-year average. Shrimp landings and value are also down compared to the previous five-year average (23.6% and 29%, respectively), but they are up compared to 2022 (37.5% and 39.7%, respectively).

Values in this report are summarized. To see actual 2023 landings and value, please see the [2023 Annual Landings Bulletin](#).

## STAFF CHANGES

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The License and Statistics Section has experienced some staff turnover since the Semi-Annual Dealer Report was released in November of last year. Josh Beil ([Joshua.Beil@deq.nc.gov](mailto:Joshua.Beil@deq.nc.gov), 252-515-5549) was hired as the Assistant Quota Monitoring Biologist at the end of November 2023. Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) State Coordinator Roz Camp retired after over 30 years of dedicated service. Her position was subsequently filled by Trey Velez ([Trey.Velez@deq.nc.gov](mailto:Trey.Velez@deq.nc.gov), 252-343-1179) in February 2024. License Supervisor Brenda Clark retired after 30+ years of dedicated service and her position was filled by Stacy Tripp ([Stacy.Tripp@deq.nc.gov](mailto:Stacy.Tripp@deq.nc.gov), 252-515-5477) in December 2023. Additionally, Pam Zuaboni retired from her Commercial Port Agent position after 15 years of dedicated service. Trip Ticket Program (TTP) staff are currently working to fill her position in the Wilmington office, as well as the vacant Quota Monitoring Biologist position and two vacant Data Clerk positions.

## MANDATORY HARVEST REPORTING

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In the fall of 2023, the North Carolina General Assembly passed Session Law 2023-137. Section 6 of this legislation requires anyone holding a commercial fishing license who is engaged in a commercial fishing operation to report all fish harvested to the Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF), regardless of sale. Additionally, it requires any person who recreationally harvests Red Drum, Flounder, Spotted Seatrout (Speckled Trout), Striped Bass and Weakfish (Gray Trout) to report that harvest to the NCDMF. Staff are currently working with N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) staff to develop processes and reporting methods that will be used to meet this mandate. While permanent rules are being developed, temporary rules must be adopted prior to December 1, 2024, when mandatory reporting requirement will take effect.

This law will have direct impacts to seafood dealers, as commercial fishermen will now be required to report their personal consumption harvest on a trip ticket. Commercial fishermen will be required to unload their harvest at a seafood dealer within 48 hours of landing, including

harvest not sold. Seafood dealers must indicate personal consumption harvest on trip tickets using one of the personal consumption disposition codes (2, 31, 38). Seafood dealers who do not have the appropriate dealer license category will be allowed to write trip tickets for commercial fishermen who are harvesting catch for personal consumption by using the personal consumption disposition codes.

If you or any of your fishermen have questions about mandatory harvest reporting, please visit NCDMF's webpage at <https://deq.nc.gov/mandatory-harvest-reporting> or contact your port agent. Additionally, stakeholders are encouraged to engage in this issue by participating in public comment opportunities with the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission and the NCWRC.

## TRIP TICKET REMINDERS

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**Split Trips:** 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, also known as a 'split 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.

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

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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.

**Disposition Codes:** The term ‘disposition’ refers to the intended use for the product recorded on the trip ticket. Common dispositions include food, bait, personal consumption, research, etc. Trip tickets include a field for ‘Disposition’ or ‘DSP.’ Older paper trip tickets may not include this field, therefore, dealers must write-in the disposition code somewhere on the ticket. If the disposition field is left blank, the disposition will typically default to food.

If the disposition is not intended to be food, it is important to use this field, as disposition type can impact fisheries management decisions and will be an important part of the Mandatory Harvest Reporting requirements starting this December. Depicted below is a table of disposition codes and their descriptions.

Disposition Code	Disposition Description
0	No Disposition
1	Food
2	Personal Use
5	Aquaculture
6	Canned Pet Food
7	Animal Food
8	Bait
9	Reduction/Meal
10	Aquarium
11	Kept, Disposition Unknown
12	Biomedical Use
13	Packing, Only
14	Fertilizer
15	Research
31	Personal Use for Food
38	Personal Use for Bait
100	Reason not specified
101	No Market
602	Seized by Law Enforcement

**Fishermen and Vessel Information:** It is important for dealers to maintain up-to-date license numbers for their fishermen and vessels. This is especially important after license renewal season. Failure to record correct license information can make it appear as if fishermen are operating illegally, with an expired license. It may also cause fishermen to miss out on future opportunities such as economic assistance programs if landings are inappropriately assigned.

**Contact Information:** It is important to provide up-to-date contact information to NCDMF so Commercial Port Agents and other staff can reach seafood dealers when a question or issues arise. Failure to provide valid contact information can lead to Marine Patrol involvement if staff are unable to contact dealers regarding trip ticket and quota monitoring reporting.

**Gill Nets:** It is important to verify the type of gill net fished with fishermen 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 as 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.

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**SAFIS UPDATE**

In March 2024, the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Office decommissioned one of their servers. The server in question was the same server used to receive trip ticket reports for dealers who hold NOAA Fisheries northeast region dealer permits. Once this occurred, these reports were routed by the developer of our software program, Bluefin Data LLC, through the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System, better known as SAFIS. The SAFIS system contains an array of data quality and assurance checks, including validating commercial fishermen license numbers and vessel registration numbers (which include state vessel registration numbers and Coast Guard documentation numbers).

The TTP is currently working with the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program to update the license and vessel registration data that SAFIS uses for the quality control checks. If a license number or vessel registration is not present in the SAFIS system, then the trip ticket will be rejected and will need to be updated with the correct information. Currently, Bluefin Data LLC is contacting seafood dealers and staff in the TTP when this occurs. If you have any questions or need any assistance in correcting information, please reach out to Josh Beil ([Joshua.Beil@deq.nc.gov](mailto:Joshua.Beil@deq.nc.gov), 252-515-5549) or your port agent.

**VESL UPDATE**

Recently, Bluefin Data LLC released a beta version of VESL. VESL is the web-based version of the North Carolina Trip Ticket System software program. Bluefin Data LLC has been working with staff in the TTP and North Carolina Department of Information Technology to get VESL ready for a production release later this year.

The TTP has reached out to a few dealers to help with the beta testing of VESL and is currently receiving feedback. That feedback will be sent to Bluefin Data LLC for further consideration before it is released into production for official use. For information on VESL, please contact Josh Beil ([Joshua.Beil@deq.nc.gov](mailto:Joshua.Beil@deq.nc.gov), 252-515-5549).

**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) <a href="mailto:Alexis.Rakestraw@deq.nc.gov">Alexis.Rakestraw@deq.nc.gov</a>
Manteo	Haley Clinton	252-342-0156 (cell) 252-423-5258 (office) <a href="mailto:Haley.Clinton@deq.nc.gov">Haley.Clinton@deq.nc.gov</a>
Morehead City	Chuck Davis	252-808-7935 (cell) 252-515-5548 (office) <a href="mailto:Chuck.Davis@deq.nc.gov">Chuck.Davis@deq.nc.gov</a>
Washington	Jon Anglemyer	252-908-6786 (cell) <a href="mailto:Jon.Anglemyer@deq.nc.gov">Jon.Anglemyer@deq.nc.gov</a>
Wilmington*	N/A	N/A

For supplies, please contact a data clerk at 252-515-5545.

If you have any questions regarding use of the North Carolina Trip Ticket System software, contact Josh Beil at [Joshua.Beil@deq.nc.gov](mailto:Joshua.Beil@deq.nc.gov) or call 252-515-5549.

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](mailto:Meredith.Whitten@deq.nc.gov) or call 252-515-5525.

\*If you are located in the Wilmington area and you have questions, until further notice, contact Michael Thompson at [Michael.Thompson@deq.nc.gov](mailto:Michael.Thompson@deq.nc.gov) or call 252-269-1847.

**UPCOMING NC MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION MEETING**

May 22-24, 2024

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: 252-948-3800  
Wilmington Office: 910-796-7215

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

