

Onslow County Shellfish Lease Hearing Comment Form

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5/12/2021 13:09 Wayne    Rees    [REDACTED]    NC

I want to briefly reiterate my comments from yesterday's meeting. First, NCDENR must find a way to limit the total number of shellfish leases. Over the past 4 years, the number of leases granted by the state has grown tremendously, with at least 80 % of these leases being water column leases (these are the most restrictive to the public, and are unsightly and a navigation hazard). The southern coastal areas (Onslow county south the the SC border) have very little expansive bodies of coastal bays and sounds, and the proliferation of leases in this area is becoming problematic with no end in sight. The lease program is benefitting very few individuals, without regard for the general public using coastal waterways. Secondly, independent clammers and oystermen, who harvest the "wild", naturally grown shellfish are being pushed away from shoreline areas where these leases are present. Oyster and clam populations tend to grow well in areas adjacent the shoreline, I would suggest that all lease areas should be located not less than 50 foot (ideally 100 feet) from any shoreline (current rules require 20 feet only for water column leases, 100 feet for developed shorelines). The rules should be changed so that all leases are located sufficiently away from any shoreline so as to allow independent clammers and oysterman the ability to effectively work their trade, as well as provide operators of kayaks, canoes, small boats, etc. access to the shoreline waters. While the shellfish lease program has many positive aspects (both environmental and economic), some changes are badly needed to preserve the rights of the general public and take into consideration the interests of independent clammers and oystermen. Wayne Rees, cell: [REDACTED]