

Flounder Citations During the 2021 Recreational Opening:

What you need to know!



For the 2021 recreational flounder opening, citations will be submitted in an online format to the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. Qualifying fish must still be weighed at an Official North Carolina Saltwater Fishing Tournament [Weigh Station](#) and then the application submitted [online](#).

Why are flounder citations being submitted online? The Division has created an online form to allow us the ability to collect additional information about flounder landed during the opening. The data collected will provide insight into the experiences of recreational anglers who land qualifying fish.

What is a qualifying flounder? Flounder that are eligible for citations are 5 pounds or greater in weight. Fish must still be weighed at an [Official North Carolina Saltwater Fishing Tournament Weigh Station](#). For information on size and bag limits during the opening, [click here](#).

Is there a release citation available? No. Due to a high level of discards in the recreational hook and line fishery, there is concern that the volume of discards can have a large direct impact on subsequent seasons if anglers continue to target and release southern flounder during closed seasons. Discards are a major source of removals in the southern flounder recreational fishery and limiting discards is critical in rebuilding the depressed stock. The Division encourages anglers to help ensure that any flounder not being kept be released quickly and in the best possible condition. If at all possible, fish should remain in the water while being de-hooked and angler should be aware that increased water and air temperatures leads to increased mortality of released fish.

Is there additional information anglers can provide? Yes! Anglers can provide carcasses for any flounder meeting legal minimum size during the recreational opening. By donating carcasses we are able to collect additional biological data including length, age, sex, and maturity. For information about the Division's Carcass Collection Program, click [here](#). Anglers may also be asked to participate in one of the Division's recreational surveys. For information on how the [Coastal Angling Program](#) collects data to improve Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) and how you can participate, click [here](#).

Can you identify your catch? If you need assistance identifying what species of flounder you caught, please [read this information](#) on the types of flounder you might encounter and why it is important to be able to distinguish the different species.

Why can flounder only be harvested during this opening? The [North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission](#) adopted Amendment 2 of the Southern Flounder FMP resulting in the need for significant reductions in flounder harvest to end overfishing. For more information on the [Southern Flounder FMP](#) and it's next steps, or how to be involved with the [Fisheries Management](#) process, please select the appropriate link.

For questions about the citation program, please contact Carole Willis via email at carole.y.willis@ncdenr.gov.