



Fish Dealer Report

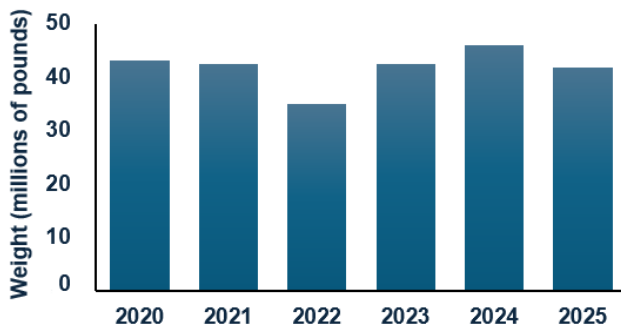
License & Statistics Section, PO Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557

July 2026

2025 COMMERCIAL LANDINGS REVIEW

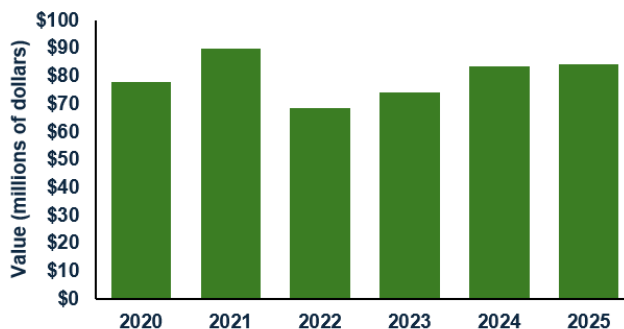
Commercial fishermen landed 41.7 million pounds of seafood in North Carolina in 2025. This was a 9.1% decrease from the 2024 landings of 45.8 million pounds and was on par with the five-year average (2020-2024) of 41.7 million pounds.

Total Landings by Weight



The estimated value for landings in 2025 was \$84.4 million, an increase of 1.1% from the 2024 estimated value of \$83.5 million and an increase of 7.2% from the five-year average of \$78.7 million.

Total Landings by Value



In 2025, the top five commercial species landed by weight were Blue Crab (hard crabs only) at 15.5 million pounds, Shrimp at 7.1 million pounds, Catfishes at 2.6 million

pounds, Striped Mullet at 2.2 million pounds, and Summer Flounder at 1.8 million pounds.

During the same period, the top five commercial species landed by ex-vessel value were Blue Crab (hard crabs only) at \$24.4 million, Shrimp at \$15.5 million, Eastern Oysters at \$10.1 million, Summer Flounder at \$6.3 million, and Bluefin Tuna at \$3.1 million.

There were notable increases in both commercial landings and ex-vessel value for several species during the 2025 calendar year. Bluefin Tuna landings showed an increase of 120.4% relative to 2024 and a 96.7% increase above the five-year average with a cumulative total of 627,689 pounds. Ex-vessel value increased 110.6% from 2024 and rose 134.3% above the five-year average.

Bonito landings also experienced an increase of 174.1% compared to 2024 and 177.2% above the five-year average along with an increase in ex-vessel value of 117.0% from 2024 and 158.6% compared to the five-year average. Atlantic (Boston) Mackerel landings in 2025 increased by 961.0% compared to 2024, while ex-vessel value rose by 1235.2%. Relative to the previous five-year average, landings and value were higher by 1013.2% and 1414.1%, respectively.

Conversely, other species experienced declines in landings during 2025. While Blue Crab (hard only) landings were 13.5% above the five-year average, compared to 2024, landings were 17.1% lower than 2024. Similarly, ex-vessel value remained 25.3% above the five-year average but fell 6.4% from 2024. In 2025, Spot landings decreased 20.9% relative to 2024 and 23.0% below the five-year average. Ex-vessel values also declined by 19.5% compared to 2024 and 31.5% below the five-year average.

Values in this report are summarized. To see complete 2025 landings and value, please reference the [2025 Annual Landings Bulletin](#).

STAFF CHANGES

Since the release of the Semi-Annual Dealer Report in November 2025, the License and Statistics Section has experienced several staffing changes.

The Trip Ticket Program is pleased to announce the addition of two new staff members to the team: Robert Greenfield (Robert.Greenfield@deq.nc.gov 252-515-5547), who joined in November 2025 as the Data Entry Clerk, and Valerie Ealey (Valerie.Ealey@deq.nc.gov 252-515-5545), who joined in April 2026 as our second Data Control Clerk.

There have been recent transitions as other staff members have moved on to further their careers outside of the program. The Trip Ticket program appreciates the work of Joshua Beil, Quota Monitoring Biologist, and Haley Clinton, Manteo Port Agent. The Trip Ticket Program wishes them the best in their future endeavors!

The process of filling those vacancies is currently underway and further updates will be shared as they become available.

MANDATORY COMMERCIAL HARVEST REPORTING

New mandatory harvest reporting requirements went into effect December 1, 2025. The North Carolina General Assembly passed Session Law 2023-137 in 2023, requiring anyone holding a commercial fishing license who is engaged in a commercial fishing operation to report all fishes harvested to the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF), regardless of sale. Recreational anglers are required to report harvest of Red Drum, Flounder, Spotted Seatrout, Striped Bass, and Weakfish.

Commercial fishermen are required to report all harvest, including landings retained for personal consumption, through the trip ticket program by bringing their catch to a seafood dealer. If the fisherman is unable to find a dealer willing to complete a trip ticket for their harvest, the fisherman can become a dealer.

Seafood dealers must indicate personal consumption harvest on trip tickets using one of the personal

consumption disposition codes: 2 (personal use), 31 (personal use for food), 38 (personal use for bait). 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 for most species. Those species managed under a state quota need to be landed and reported by a dealer possessing the appropriate quota monitoring dealer permit (Estuarine Flounder, Ocean Flounder, Striped Bass, Spiny Dogfish, and Black Sea Bass from North of Cape Hatteras).

Enforcement penalties are being phased in over a period of three years. Verbal warnings will transition to warning tickets December 1, 2026, with fines starting December 1, 2027.

If you, or any of your fishermen, have questions about mandatory harvest reporting, please visit [NCDMF's Mandatory Harvest Reporting Page](#) or contact your port agent.

PROPOSED MFC RULE PACKAGE

At its November 2025 business meeting, the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) gave final approval for a package of proposed rules for permits, and shellfish franchises and leases. The rules were approved by the Rules Review Commission at its regular meeting in December 2025 and are awaiting the 2026 legislative review process to become effective. Two of the proposed rule changes pertain to the MFC's recordkeeping requirements rule ([15A NCAC 031 .0114](#)) and may be of interest to fish dealers.

First, any seafood dealer that reports trip tickets electronically would be required to report quota monitoring logs electronically. The addition of the Estuarine Flounder Dealer Permit in 2022 caused a 151% increase in the total number of dealers that hold at least one permit for monitoring fisheries under a quota or allocation. Requiring electronic quota monitoring reporting for dealers that are already participating in data submission electronically is expected to yield a significant savings of dealer and N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) employee time and resources at no additional cost to dealers. DMF

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employees would have more time to follow up by phone with dealers that have not submitted their quota monitoring logs, especially when commercial harvest for a quota monitored species has ended and final accounting needs to occur.

The second proposed rule change would clarify a fish dealer is required to submit a trip ticket for fish that are not sold. The proposed amendment would align the MFC's recordkeeping requirements rule with N.C. General Statutes and the [MFC rule](#) for commercial [Mandatory Harvest Reporting Requirements](#) that was adopted in 2024. [State law](#) requires anyone holding a commercial fishing license who is engaged in a commercial fishing operation to report all fish harvested to DMF, regardless of sale, including all finfish, shellfish, and crustaceans.

Harvest must be unloaded at a seafood dealer within 48 hours of landing. Seafood dealers must record unsold harvest on the trip ticket using the personal consumption disposition codes. Seafood dealers who do not have the appropriate dealer license category are allowed to write trip tickets for commercial fishermen who are harvesting catch for personal consumption by using the personal consumption disposition codes. Mandatory harvest reporting is enforced by DMF's Marine Patrol. Enforcement is continuing to be phased in over a period of three years, which began December 1, 2025 with a verbal warning. Starting December 1, 2026 a warning ticket will be issued for failure to report harvest. Effective December 1, 2027, failure to report harvest will be an infraction with a \$35 fine plus court fees. These infractions count towards suspension of fishing licenses and permits.

Following the legislative review process in 2026, the rules could be effective as early as around mid-June 2026. More information about the proposed rules can be found on the MFC's [Proposed Rules](#) webpage for the 2025-2026 package. For questions about the MFC rulemaking process, email [Catherine Blum](#), rules coordinator for the DMF.

FMP UPDATES

Blue Crab: A blue crab stock assessment webinar was held on May 23, 2026. During the webinar, Division stock assessment scientists described the stock assessment

process, including recent and future changes, and reported on the progress in analyzing fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data used in the assessment model. Stock assessment scientists also described the methods for the assessment of North Carolina's Blue Crab stock, including how data is selected for use. Members of the public had an opportunity to give feedback on the stock assessment progress and process. If you were unable to attend, a recording of the webinar is available [here](#). Review of the state Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP) is scheduled to begin later this year.

Sheepshead: As a reminder, [new management](#) went into effect March 16, 2026 that increased the recreational and commercial minimum size from 10-inches fork length to 14 inches total length, reduced the recreational bag limit from 10 fish to five fish per person per day, and set commercial pound net trip limits to 1,500 pounds per day or per trip whichever is more restrictive. All other commercial sheepshead regulations were maintained.

Spotted Seatrout: Due to a severe cold stun event in late January and early February 2026 the [Spotted Seatrout fishery was closed](#) on February 6 in accordance with the cold stun adaptive management framework adopted in Amendment 1 to the N.C. Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The fishery will remain closed until June 30.

FMP's Under Review: The Red Drum, Southern Flounder, and Kingfishes FMPs are currently under review. Review of the Blue Crab and Bay Scallop FMPs is scheduled to begin later this year.



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TRIP TICKET REMINDERS

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 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 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 is an important part of the Mandatory Harvest Reporting requirements that began December 2025. Depicted below is a table of disposition codes and their descriptions.

Disposition Code	Disposition Description
0	No Disposition
1	Food
2	Personal Use
7	Animal Food
8	Bait
11	Kept, Disposition Unknown
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 Trip Ticket Program 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.

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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.

VESL Program

VESL, North Carolina's electronic trip ticket reporting platform, has expanded its user base and fully replaced PC Trip Ticket as the state's electronic reporting method. Enhancements to VESL have continued throughout 2025 into 2026. Integrated business features have been added and improved, and the option for bulk price updates is now available. Additional features include automatic backup, full integration for dealers requiring federal reporting (including HMS species), and verification of Fisherman and Vessel numbers. The VESL web platform can be accessed from nearly any internet-connected device, including smartphones and tablets.

Contact Travis Williams by phone or email at 252-515-5550 or Travis.Williams@deq.nc.gov to get started.

QUOTA MONITORING

Beginning in February 2026, the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries launched a new electronic reporting option for fish dealers with quota monitoring permits. Permitted dealers can now submit daily reports using the web form at <https://quotamonitormingdmf.deq.nc.gov> in place of the Quota Monitoring Permits Daily Reporting

Form (Log). The web form is intuitively designed to simplify reporting of permitted species.

Scan to open the Quota Monitoring web form:

<https://quotamonitormingdmf.deq.nc.gov>

If you have any questions, contact:



Travis Williams, 252-515-5550,
Travis.Williams@deq.nc.gov

TRIP TICKET CONTACTS

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

Elizabeth City	Alexis Rakestraw	252-337-5362 (cell) Alexis.Rakestraw@deq.nc.gov
Morehead City	Chuck Davis	252-808-7935 (cell) 252-515-5548 (office) Chuck.Davis@deq.nc.gov
Washington	Jon Anglemyer	252-908-6786 (cell) Jon.Anglemyer@deq.nc.gov
Wilmington	Mackenzie Freeman	252-241-0118 (cell) 910-796-7307 (office) Mackenzie.Freeman@deq.nc.gov

For supplies, please contact one of our data clerks at 252-515-5544 or 252-515-5545.

If you have any questions regarding the use of VESL, contact Travis Williams at Travis.Williams@deq.nc.gov or call 252-515-5550.

If you are interested in accessing commercial fisheries data or would like to request a summary of your trip ticket landings, please contact Alan Bianchi at Alan.Bianchi@deq.nc.gov or call 252-515-5546.

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NC VESL Trip Ticket Program

How to Export – Send to State



Click “Three Line Icon” (upper left)

Click “Exports” from slide menu

Manage

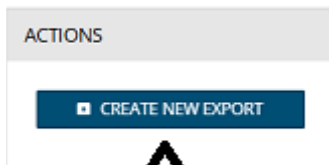
Entities

Analytics

Operations

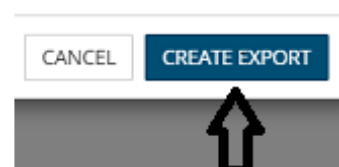
Reporting

Exports



Click “Create New Export”

Scroll down, click “Create Export”



*Please refer to the NC VESL program manual for full details.
Contact the NC VESL liaison at (252) 515-5550 for assistance.*

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**

