



JOSH STEIN  
*Governor*

D. REID WILSON  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

**FF-19-2026**

## **PROCLAMATION**

### **RE: ESTUARINE STRIPED BASS – RECREATIONAL – SEASON OPEN – PORTIONS OF TAR-PAMLICO AND NEUSE RIVERS INTERNAL COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS**

**This proclamation supersedes FF-6-2019, dated March 26, 2019. This proclamation opens portions of the Tar-Pamlico and Neuse rivers in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Central Southern Management Area (CSMA) to the harvest of striped bass (including hybrids) for recreational purposes, sets the 2026 recreational season and harvest limits, and maintains the striped bass harvest closure in the remaining areas of the CSMA in accordance with the 2026 Revision to Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan.**

Kathy B. Rawls, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective at **12:01 A.M., Wednesday, April 1, 2026**, the following restrictions shall apply to the taking of striped bass for recreational purposes in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Central Southern Management Area (CSMA):

I. **AREA DESCRIPTION** ([See Map](#))

- A. Tar-Pamlico River: All Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters west of a line beginning at a point on the north shore 35° 25.1669' N - 76° 45.5251' W (Gum Point); running southwesterly to a point on the south shore 35° 23.4453' N - 76° 46.4346' W (Fork Point).
- B. Neuse River: All Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters west of a line beginning at a point on the north shore 35° 02.1433' N - 76° 55.9965' W (Cooper Point); running southwesterly to a point on the south shore at 35° 00.1550' N - 76° 58.5738' W (Fisher Landing Point).

II. **SEASON**

It shall be unlawful to possess striped bass in the Central Southern Management Area (CSMA), as defined in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03R .0201 (c), except for recreational purposes from 12:01 A.M. on Wednesday April 1, 2026, through 11:59 P.M. on Thursday, April 30, 2026, in the areas described in Section I.

III. **SIZE AND CREEL LIMITS**

In the areas and during the times described in Sections I and II:

- A. It shall be unlawful to possess striped bass less than 18 inches total length.
- B. It shall be unlawful to possess striped bass between 22- and 27-inches total length.
- C. It shall be unlawful to possess more than one (1) striped bass per person per day or per trip, whichever is more restrictive.

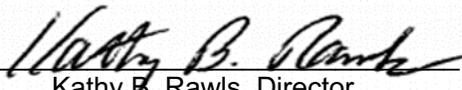
IV. **MEANS AND METHODS**

- A. Striped bass may be taken by hook and line or with recreational commercial gear for recreational purposes seven days a week during the open season.
- B. It shall be unlawful to sell, offer for sale, or purchase striped bass taken for recreational purposes by hook and line or with recreational commercial gear.

V. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- A. This proclamation is issued under the authority of N.C.G.S. 113-134; 113-170.4; 113-170.5; 113-182; 113.182.1; 113-221.1; 143B-289.52 and N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 15A NCAC 03H .0103; 03M .0202; 03M .0512; and 03Q. 0107.
- B. It is unlawful to violate the provisions of any proclamation issued by the Fisheries Director under their delegated authority pursuant to N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03H.0103.
- C. In accordance with N.C. General Statute 113-221.1(c) All persons who may be affected by proclamations issued by the Fisheries Director are under a duty to keep themselves informed of current proclamations.
- D. This proclamation, which is consistent with the [North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission proclamation](#) issued on March 20, 2026, only applies to Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Central Southern Management Area (CSMA).
- E. For Recreational Commercial Gear License refer to M-type proclamations for gill net regulations that may be effective in the areas covered by this proclamation and M-type proclamations for Estuarine Gill Net Permit and Observer Trip Scheduling System (refer to [M-4-2026](#) for reference).
- F. Holders of Recreational Commercial Gear Licenses (RCGL) must follow the bag and harvest restrictions of the recreational fishery for striped bass. Commercial fishing equipment authorized by the Recreational Commercial Gear License is not considered commercial fishing equipment in the striped bass fishery and it is illegal to sell or purchase striped bass taken by this method in accordance with N.C.G.S. 113-173.
- G. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0201 defines striped bass as striped bass and its hybrids
- H. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03Q .0107 states that it is unlawful to possess striped bass or striped bass hybrids less than 18 inches total length and between the lengths of 22- and 27-inches total length in Internal Joint Fishing Waters of the CSMA.
- I. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 15A NCAC 03M .0202 and 15A NCAC 03Q .0107 state that it is unlawful to possess striped bass from the Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Cape Fear River and its tributaries, including Snow's Cut.
- J. **N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 3I .0124 requires recreational fisherman who harvest flounder, red drum, spotted seatrout, striped bass, and weakfish from Coastal, Joint, and Inland Fishing Waters or Inland Fishing Waters adjacent to Internal Coastal or Joint Fishing Waters to report that harvest to the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries.**
- K. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0202 states that all striped bass that do not meet the minimum size limit specified by proclamation shall immediately be returned to the waters from which taken regardless of condition.
- L. In accordance with N.C. General Statute 113-221(f) and 113-221.1(c) all persons who may be affected by rules and proclamations issued by the Fisheries Director are under a duty to keep themselves informed of current rules and proclamations.
- M. Contact N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557, 252-515-5500 or 800-682-2632 for more information or visit the division website at <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries>.

- N. This proclamation opens portions of the Tar-Pamlico and Neuse rivers in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Central Southern Management Area (CSMA) to the harvest of striped bass (including hybrids) for recreational purposes, sets the 2026 recreational season and harvest limits, and maintains the striped bass harvest closure in the remaining areas of the CSMA in accordance with the 2026 Revision to Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan.

By:   
Kathy B. Rawls, Director  
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

March 20, 2026  
10:30 A.M.