JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

MICHAEL S. LOEFFLER
Interim Director

FF-47-2026

PROCLAMATION

RE: FLOUNDER – COMMERCIAL FISHING OPERATIONS - ATLANTIC OCEAN

This proclamation supersedes Proclamation FF-38-2026, dated September 9, 2026. This proclamation opens the Atlantic Ocean commercial flounder season at 12:01 A.M., October 27, 2026, and establishes a 30,000-pound trip limit for vessels employing trawls. Properly licensed vessel captains can possess landing limits for other states, but it shall be unlawful to offload those fish in North Carolina. The fishery will close by proclamation once the annual North Carolina quota is reached or at 6:00 P.M., December 31, 2026, whichever occurs first.

Michael S. Loeffler, Interim Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective at **12:01 A.M., October 27, 2026,** the following restrictions shall apply to the Atlantic Ocean commercial flounder fishery:

I. **HARVEST PERIOD AND LIMITS**

A. It shall be unlawful for persons participating in a commercial fishing operation employing trawls, regardless of the number of people involved, **to possess or land more than 30,000 pounds of flounder per trip taken from the Atlantic Ocean**.

B. Properly licensed vessel captains employing trawls can possess landing limits for other states, but it shall be unlawful to offload those fish in North Carolina.

C. It shall be unlawful to land from a vessel more than 100 pounds of flounder taken from the Atlantic Ocean more than once in any consecutive 5-day period.

D. It shall be unlawful for a fish dealer to fail to contact the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (252-515-5507) prior to a vessel offloading greater than 100 pounds of flounder taken from the Atlantic Ocean. The fish dealer shall provide the name of the vessel, the vessel captain, an estimate of the amount in pounds of flounder on board the vessel, and the anticipated or approximate offloading time.

E. The Atlantic Ocean flounder fishery will close by proclamation once the quota has been reached, or at 6:00 P.M., December 31, 2026, whichever occurs first.

F. It shall be unlawful for persons participating in a commercial fishing operation to possess flounder from the Atlantic Ocean Waters if taken by any method other than trawl and in accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0503.

II. **TRANSPORTATION EXEMPTION**

Commercial trawl operations shall be exempt from the transportation requirement set out in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0120 when transporting flounder in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters. Commercial trawl operations are not exempt when in possession of flounder and fishing in a closed area.

III. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

A. This proclamation is issued under the authority of N.C.G.S. 113-134; 113-134.1; 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 03M .0503 and .0512.

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. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0101 (5)(f), fish shall be considered landed when the fish reach the shore or structure connected to the shore.
D. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0503 (a), it shall be unlawful to possess flounder less than 14 inches total length taken from the Atlantic Ocean in a commercial fishing operation.
E. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0503 (c) (1), it shall be unlawful to land more than 100 pounds per trip of flounder taken from the Atlantic Ocean unless the vessel has been issued a License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean. This is in addition to the normally required licenses.
F. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0503 (c) (2), it shall be unlawful for a fish dealer to purchase or offload more than 100 pounds of flounder taken from the Atlantic Ocean by a vessel whose owner or the responsible party that has not first procured a valid License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean.
G. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0113, it shall be unlawful for any licensee under Chapter 113, Subchapter IV of the General Statutes to refuse to allow the Fisheries Director or their agents to obtain biological data, harvest information, or other statistical data necessary or useful to the conservation and management of marine and estuarine resources from fish in the licensee's possession.
H. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0503 (e)(2), it shall be unlawful for fish dealers to allow vessels holding a valid License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean to land more than 100 pounds of flounder without first obtaining an Atlantic Ocean Flounder Dealer Permit.
I. The intent of this proclamation is to establish harvest periods and limits for the taking of flounder from the Atlantic Ocean to assure that the quota allocated to North Carolina in the joint Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council/Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan is not exceeded. The summer flounder commercial fishery and management unit range is from Maine to North Carolina.
J. Atlantic Ocean Flounder Dealer Permits are available at no cost from all Division of Marine Fisheries License Offices.
K. Contact the 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
L. 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.
M. **This proclamation opens the Atlantic Ocean commercial flounder season at 12:01 A.M., October 27, 2026, and establishes a 30,000-pound trip limit for vessels employing trawls. Properly licensed vessel captains can possess landing limits for other states, but it shall be unlawful to offload those fish in North Carolina. The fishery will close by proclamation once the annual North Carolina quota is reached or at 6:00 P.M., December 31, 2026, whichever occurs first.**

By: _____
Michael S. Loeffler, Interim Director
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

October 23, 2026
11:45 A.M.