JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

JONATHAN HOWELL
Director

FF-48-2026

PROCLAMATION

RE: FLOUNDER – COMMERCIAL – INTERNAL COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS AND ATLANTIC OCEAN WATERS (GEAR AND AREA SPECIFIC) – CLOSES THE MOBILE GEAR NORTHERN MANAGEMENT AREA, MAINTAINS THE CLOSURE OF THE MOBILE GEAR SOUTHERN MANAGEMENT AREA AND THE POUND NET NORTHERN MANAGEMENT AREA, AND MAINTAINS THE 250-POUND TRIP LMITS FOR THE POUND NET SOUTHERN MANAGEMENT AREAAND OPENING OF THE POUND NET CENTRAL MANAGEMENT AREA

This proclamation supersedes proclamation FF-44-2026, dated October 15, 2026. This proclamation closes the Mobile Gear Northern Management Area and maintains 250-pound trip limit for the Pound Net Southern Management Area and the opening of the Pound Net Central Management Area. The Pound Net Northern and Mobile Gear Southern Management Areas remain closed. This action is being taken to comply with the requirements of Amendment 4 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan and maintain harvest within the total allowable landings (TAL).

Jonathan Howell, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective **at 10:00 A.M., Wednesday, October 28, 2026**, the following restrictions will apply to the taking of flounder for **commercial purposes in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters (Sections I and II) and Atlantic Ocean Waters (Section III)**:

I. **MOBILE GEAR DEFINITION, SEASON OPENING DATES, AND MANAGEMENT AREA DESCRIPTIONS** (See Maps)

A. **Definition:** Mobile gears are inclusive of all gears that may land estuarine flounder with the exception of pound nets.

B. **Mobile Gear Northern Management Area:** encompasses all Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters from the North Carolina/Virginia border south to a line in Core Sound at 34° 48.2700' N latitude which runs approximately from the Club House on Core Banks westerly to a point on the shore at Davis near Marker "1".

1. The flounder harvest period for the Mobile Gear Northern Management Area opened at 12:01 A.M., Wednesday, September 30, 2026.
2. **Effective 10:00 A.M., Wednesday, October 28, 2026, it shall be unlawful to take flounder by mobile gears from the Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Mobile Gear Northern Management Area.**
3. **Effective 6:00 P.M. on Wednesday, October 28, 2026, it shall be unlawful for dealers to purchase flounder taken by mobile gears from Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Mobile Gear Northern Management Area.**

C. **Mobile Gear Southern Management Area:** encompasses all Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters from the line described above in Section I. B. south to the North Carolina/South Carolina border.

It shall be unlawful to take flounder by mobile gears from the Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Mobile Gear Southern Management Area. The flounder harvest period for the Mobile Gear Southern Management Area closed on October 3, 2026, and will not reopen this year.

II. **POUND NET SEASON OPENING DATES AND MANAGEMENT AREA DESCRIPTIONS (See Maps)**

A. **Pound Net Northern Management Area:** encompasses all Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters from the North Carolina/Virginia border south to a line extending across the 35° 46.3000'N latitude which runs approximately from the north end of Pea Island (old Coast Guard station) westerly to a point on the mainland Dare County shore at Point Peter Canal: this area includes Albemarle, Currituck, Roanoke, and Croatan sounds and their associated rivers or waters.

1. **It shall be unlawful to take flounder by pound nets from the Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Pound Net Northern Management Area. The flounder harvest period for the Pound Net Northern Management Area closed on October 14, 2026, and will not reopen this year.**
2. **It shall be unlawful to fail to render flounder pound net sets inoperable, by dropping a corner to each holding pen or dropping tunnels, during the closed flounder season in the Pound Net Northern Management Area in accordance with 15A NCAC 03J .0505 (a)(3).**
3. **It shall be unlawful for dealers to purchase flounder taken by pound nets from the Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Pound Net Northern Management Area.**

B. **Pound Net Central Management Area:** encompasses all Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters from the line described in Section II. A. south to a line starting at a point on Portsmouth Island 35° 00.0765' N – 76° 07.4123' W running westerly to Cedar Island Ferry following the shoreline to a point at Cedar Island Ferry landing 35° 01.1349' N – 76° 18.7599' W following Highway 12 to the intersection of Highway 70 to the Core Creek bridge; this area includes Pamlico Sound and the Tar-Pamlico, Neuse, Pungo, and Bay rivers and their tributaries.

1. **The flounder harvest period for the Pound Net Central Management Area opened at 12:01 A.M., Wednesday, September 30, 2026.**
2. **The harvest period will close by proclamation to maintain harvest within the landings sub-allocation for the Pound Net Central Management Area when the TAL is approached.**

C. **Pound Net Southern Management Area:** encompasses all Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters from the line described above Section in II. B. south to the North Carolina/South Carolina border.

1. The flounder harvest period for the Pound Net Southern Management Area opened at 12:01 A.M., Wednesday, September 30, 2026.
2. **It shall be unlawful for a SCFL/RSCFL holder participating in a commercial fishing operation employing pound nets in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Pound Net Southern Management Area to take, possess, or land more than 250-pounds of flounder per day unless fishing with two or more SCFL/RSCL holders on board.**
3. **It shall be unlawful for persons participating in a commercial fishing operation consisting of more than one SCFL/RSCFL holder to take, possess, or land more than 500 pounds of flounder per day.**
4. **It shall be unlawful for dealers to purchase more than 250-pounds of flounder per day from a person participating in a commercial fishing operation employing pound nets in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing**

Waters of the Pound Net Southern Management Area.

III. **ATLANTIC OCEAN WATERS**

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

IV. **MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT**

It shall be unlawful to possess flounder less than 15 inches total length in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters.

V. **GEAR RESTRICTIONS**

A. **It shall be unlawful to possess flounder taken from gill nets with a stretched mesh length less than 6 inches.**
B. It shall be unlawful to use any puncturing devices, such as fish picks, gigs, or spears to retrieve or cull flounder taken from pound nets.

VI. **TRANSPORTATION EXEMPTION**

Commercial fishing operations shall be exempt from the transportation requirement set out in 15A NCAC 03I .0120 when transporting flounder in waterbodies that are closed to harvest. Commercial fishing operations are not exempt when in possession of flounder and fishing in a closed area.

VII. **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 Rules 15A NCAC 03H .0103; 03M .0503 and 03M .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 Rule 15A NCAC 03H .0103.
C. The intent of this proclamation is to close the Mobile Gear Northern Management Area in order to manage the commercial flounder fishery in accordance with Amendment 4 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan and maintain landings within the total allowable landings (TAL). For information on sub-allocations by Gear Management Area see Southern Flounder FAQ website at https://www.deq.nc.gov/southern-flounder-FAQ.
D. **In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03J .0505 (a)(3) it shall be unlawful to fail to render the pound net set inoperable during any closed season for the type of fishery for which the pound net is permitted..**
E. See additional regulations on flounder from the Atlantic Ocean in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0503.
F. For additional gill net restrictions refer to the most recent M-type proclamations that apply to large-mesh gill nets for specific management areas. These can be found on the current proclamations website at https://www.deq.nc.gov/current-fisheries-management-proclamations.
G. In accordance with M-16-2026, it shall be unlawful to use flounder pound net sets without four unobstructed escape panels in each pound. The escape panels shall be fastened to the bottom and corner ropes on each wall on the side and back of the pound opposite the heart. The escape panels shall be a minimum mesh size 5 ¾ inches, hung on the diamond, and shall be at least six meshes high and eight meshes long.
H. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0503 (f)(1), it shall be unlawful for an individual to deploy gill nets in Internal Waters, except

for runaround, strike, drop, or drift gill nets, without possessing a valid Estuarine Gill Net Permit issued by the Division.

I. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0503 (e)(4)(B), it shall be unlawful for a fish dealer to possess, purchase, sell, or offer for sale flounder taken from estuarine waters without first obtaining an Estuarine Flounder Dealer Permit required for specific management purposes for the applicable fisheries and harvest area. These permits are available at no cost from all Division of Marine Fisheries License Offices.

J. 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.

K. 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 www.ncmarinefisheries.net.

L. **This proclamation closes the Mobile Gear Northern Management Area and maintains 250-pound trip limit for the Pound Net Southern Management Area and the opening of the Pound Net Central Management Area. The Pound Net Northern and Mobile Gear Southern Management Areas remain closed. This action is being taken to comply with the requirements of Amendment 4 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan and maintain harvest within the total allowable landings (TAL).**

By: Jonathan Howell
Jonathan Howell, Director
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

October 27, 2026
9:45 A.M.