



JOSH STEIN  
*Governor*

D. REID WILSON  
*Secretary*

KATHY B. RAWLS  
*Director*

**RS-4-2026**

**PROCLAMATION**

**RE: RESEARCH SANCTUARY- TOPSAIL SOUND – UNC-WILMINGTON**

**This proclamation establishes a closure to all commercial and recreational gears except hand harvest for shellfish, crab pots, hook and line, and cast nets in three Research Sanctuaries in Topsail Sound adjacent to the Intracoastal Waterway.**

Kathy B. Rawls, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective at **12:01 A.M., July 23, 2026**, in the area described below, **the following restrictions apply:**

**I. AREA DESCRIPTION**

**TOPSAIL SOUND**

Along the west side of Intracoastal Waterway (IWW) in Topsail Sound are three separate research sanctuaries each delineated by poles with signs shown on the attached map. The location of the poles are as follows:

- A. Site 1 is in the vicinity of Howard Landing, Howard Channel, and Old Topsail Creek at approximately 1.57 acres in size ([Map 1](#)).

Pole 1	34° 21.4677' N	77° 40.7114' W
Pole 2	34° 21.4703' N	77° 40.6564' W
Pole 3	34° 21.4988' N	77° 40.6170' W
Pole 4	34° 21.5220' N	77° 40.6437' W

- B. Site 2 is approximately halfway between Sloop Point and Kings Landing on the mainland side of the IWW at approximately 3.16 acres in size ([Map 2](#)).

Pole 1	34° 23.8625' N	77° 36.9835' W
Pole 2	34° 23.8436' N	77° 36.9586' W
Pole 3	34° 23.8747' N	77° 36.8984' W
Pole 4	34° 23.9303' N	77° 36.9460' W
Pole 5	34° 23.9094' N	77° 36.9839' W

- C. Site 3 is in the vicinity of Sloop Point near Moore Landing at approximately 3.52 acres in size ([Map 3](#)).

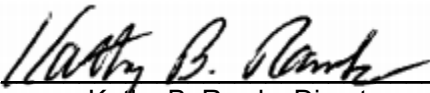
Pole 1	34° 24.3940' N	77° 35.9992' W
Pole 2	34° 24.3631' N	77° 35.9527' W
Pole 3	34° 24.4093' N	77° 35.8703' W
Pole 4	34° 24.4443' N	77° 35.9255' W

II. **RESTRICTIONS**

It shall be unlawful to use recreational and commercial gears except hand harvest for shellfish, crab pots, hook and line, and cast nets in the areas described in Section I.

III. **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; 113-221.1; 143B-289.52; and N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 15A NCAC 03H .0103 and 03I .0109.
- B. It is unlawful to violate 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. These research sanctuaries are part of UNC-Wilmington's long term monitoring sites to focus on the seagrass *Ruppia maritima* or widgeon grass, to collect data on its reproductive effort, seed bank dynamics, and identify environmental drivers influencing persistence to understand its responses to environmental stressors, especially in transition zones. *Ruppia maritima* may be a useful restoration species due to its rapid colonization and broad tolerance.
- E. 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 our website at <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries>.
- F. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0109, any closure or restriction in the Research Sanctuary shall be for no more than one year, subject to renewal at the discretion of the Fisheries Director.
- G. **This proclamation establishes a closure to all commercial and recreational gears except hand harvest for shellfish, crab pots, hook and line, and cast nets in three Research Sanctuaries in Topsail Sound adjacent to the Intracoastal Waterway.**

BY:   
Kathy B. Rawls, Director  
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES, DEQ

July 9, 2026  
2:30 P.M.