

THE MFC ADVISER
Marine Fisheries Commission Business Meeting
Hilton Riverfront, New Bern North Carolina
May 20-22, 2015

The commission held a public meeting on the evening of May 20, followed by a business meeting May 21-22, at the Hilton Riverfront in New Bern, North Carolina.

The briefing book, presentations and audio from this meeting can be found at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/may-2015-briefing-book>.

PUBLIC MEETING – May 18

Chairman Sammy Corbett called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.; the following individuals spoke:

Michael Peele, from Hatteras Island, talked about flounder reductions coinciding with the cost of licenses increasing, gear restrictions and now more possible reductions at the peak of the season. He said fishermen want to work; they don't want to stay home.

Mark Needum, from Atlantic, didn't know what needed to be done, but asked what has been accomplished over the last 20 years. He said fishermen have to work; they have to eat.

Forest Oakes said an 18-inch size limit is ridiculous. The Division of Marine Fisheries says there is a problem with the southern flounder stock, but that's not true; there were more flounders caught last year and in less time.

Jan Willis, from Carteret County, agreed with recent comments made by Ken Seigler at a Finfish Advisory Committee meeting about too many crab pots being set in a small area. She said that's how recreational fishermen feel about gill nets in small creeks and that all gill nets in creeks should be eliminated.

Warren Judge, a Dare County commissioner, talked about access and over regulation and advocated for the right of commercial fishermen to work, asking for the commission to take a new direction on flounder.

Doug Cross, with Pamlico Packing Company, talked about recent stock assessments that said menhaden and speckled trout were overfished and then a short time later it was determined those stocks were okay. He said the southern flounder stock assessment did not pass peer review and questioned the validity of the data the commission was using to justify the need for a flounder supplement.

Rick Scroggs, from Swansboro, said fishing is not as good as it used to be and asked the commission to do what is in the best interest of the science to have fish like we used to have.

Robert McBride, from Frisco, questioned the science being used for southern flounder and said there had been a decrease in the numbers of pound nets and gill nets over the years. He encouraged the commission to have clean motives and wisdom regarding its actions.

Bob Lorenz, from Wilmington and member of the Southern and Sea Turtle advisory committees, said aggressive action was needed to restore southern flounder and that we can no longer rely on the sea turtle incidental take permit to control flounder fishing. He cautioned the commission not to let southern flounder go the way of winter flounder in New England.

Ron McCoy, from Hampstead, said that North Carolina needed to get user groups together to create a vision of how to grow our fishery like Louisiana had successfully done.

Donald Willis, from New Bern, said he's watched fisheries management for a long time and the commission now seems more interested in saving jobs than saving fish. He urged the commission to err on the side of the resource, because if we take care of the resource, we all win.

Cole Harmon, from Wrightsville Beach, gigs flounder and said the season was already closed in December, and if the commission closes more, he will be out of a job. He said there was not a problem with the flounder stock and there were plenty of fish.

Wheeler Balance, a 14-year-old from Hatteras, said fishing was his heritage and that he believes in managing fisheries on sound science. He asked the commission to find a solution by working together with the fishermen.

Dave Stewart talked about declines he's seen in the Neuse River and Pamlico Sound in the last 35 years and that weather, overfishing, pollution, and water quality all played a role in the decline. He said if the commission made a decision to close or reduce flounder catch, it needs to be across the board for both user groups.

Mike Dennis, from Cape Fear Guide Service, said a recreational reduction in flounder will destroy the inshore for-hire fishery business.

John Hudnall, a pound netter, talked about the history in increased size limits with southern flounder and the decrease in the number of pound nets. He said pound netters cannot stand any more reductions.

Perry Wood Beasley, Sr., with N.C. Watermen United, said he was there to fight for people to have the freedom to fish. He said all the counties surrounding the sounds support the commercial fishermen. He said N.C. Watermen United opposed the flounder supplement.

Reed Jarvis said it seems the science is not complete with the southern flounder stock assessment. He advised that if the commission makes a decision without peer reviewed science, it would be making a bad decision. He supported reducing the recreational size limit to 14 inches and reducing bycatch.

Ken Eiler, from Carteret County, said science should drive the commission's decision, but that heritage and influence seems to drive fisheries management. He said North Carolina is the only state that allows netting in creeks and that the future is in recreational fishing, regardless of what your heritage is. He closed by saying the buffalo hunters thought there was plenty of buffalo until they killed the last two and that North Carolina has been eating the seed corn for years.

Glenn Skinner, from Carteret County, asked if it could be said with surety that any of the flounder options being considered would have a 50 percent chance of rebuilding the stock. Division Director Louis Daniel responded not without a stock assessment. Skinner said the spotted seatrout assessment was wrong and encouraged the commission to wait for the stock assessment on flounder to be completed before taking action, saying flounder couldn't be effectively managed without knowing the data from other states. He also said managers needed to stop using fishery management as a weapon instead of a tool to build better fisheries.

David Peters talked about how fishing has declined over the years and told the commission to not let politics make the decision, but to do what is right for the fish.

David Bush, fisheries biologist for the N.C. Fisheries Association, said the proposals being considered are very conservative when we do not know if a problem exists. He said southern flounder has cycles with peaks and valleys and the commercial sector is already impacted by the measures in the incidental take permit. He said he supports initiating an amendment to the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan rather than moving forward with a supplement.

Commissioner Laughridge asked if Mr. Bush was an employee of the N.C. Fisheries Association, or if he was under contract and wanted to know about his background and education and said he could provide that information at a later date if necessary.

William Kelly Todd, from Brunswick County, said that if the commission increased the size limit for southern flounder we would be catching more of the big, breeding females. He said the current recreational size limit was fine.

Commissioner Mike Wicker asked to say a few words and said he did not want to hear any more comments questioning if he knew the science or if he was telling the truth. He said people who wanted to discuss these issues could come see him after the meeting.

Colton Robinson, from Varnamtown, said in the past five years he has seen an increase in the numbers of flounder.

Keith Bruno, from Pamlico County Fishermen's Association and a member of the Northern Advisory Committee, said he fishes both commercially and recreationally. He said a supplement should be used as an emergency measure and there is no emergency with southern flounder.

Phillip Goodwin, from Carteret County, said pound nets have been doing very good the past couple of years. He said some people have been saying not to worry about the jobs that would be impacted by some of these proposals, but Goodwin said he was worried about it. He said the pound net fishery was a good clean fishery.

Bill Rich, Hyde County manager, read a resolution from the Hyde County Commission, which did not support use of supplement process for flounder management management.

Lee Morris, from Washington County, said he depends on flounder, that the stocks are healthy and that pound nets had the best fall this last year that they had had in a long time. He talked about concerns he had with the time and the places the division does its sampling and encouraged the division to work with fishermen to have more effective sampling.

Bert Owens, from Beaufort, asked if the fishery management plan has been based on science to this point. Director Louis Daniel said the initial Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan should have had a larger reduction than the Marine Fisheries Commission implemented and then the gear restrictions in the sea turtle settlement agreement and the incidental take permit did not have as large an impact as was anticipated. Owens told the commission to make hard decisions needed for the short term so that the jobs will be there for the long term. He then asked about closing speckled trout season because of cold stuns.

Bob Dillard, from Pamlico County, said he was there defending the fish and that he doesn't want to see flounder and speckled trout get to where gray trout are today. He talked about the economic impact of recreational fishermen in North Carolina and talked about other states having higher bag limits.

Greg Judy said if more protective measures are needed for flounder they should be addressed through the fishery management plan amendment process. He cautioned the commission not to be hasty in pursuing a supplement.

Birdie Potter, from Pamlico County, said she would rather speak the following day but then asked how many commercial fishermen are on the board. Chairman Corbett responded there were three commercial fishing seats on the commission.

Billy Ray Lucas, Jr., with Carolina Fishers of Men Inshore Trail, said North Carolina's greatest asset should be protected but it was being trampled and raped by gill nets and trawlers. He supported the N.C. Wildlife Federation's recommendations in its Sound Solutions campaign and said change was needed.

Dennis Durham, from Wilmington, said a lot of people fish different areas, and some are seeing better catches and some are not. He felt there were already enough harvest restrictions and cuts and it was not fair to any recreational fisherman that pays to fish in this state.

Buzz Frederick, from Queens Creek, said the biggest stock declining is the commercial fishermen. He told the commission that people think we will be walking on fish if we get rid of gill nets, but that has not been the case in other states.

Ken Seigler, from Hubert, said in reference to earlier comments regarding to crab pots, that there is a vast difference between crab pots and gill nets and the times those gears could be used. In regards to flounder, he said changing biological reference points created problems that don't exist. Reality is, when there is an increase in the size limit, there is an increase or a target on the most productive fish. Director Daniel responded it was unfair to characterize modifications to reference points as trying to create a problem and that the reference points were changed to ensure sustainability and give a better age structure.

Jimmie Goodwin, Jr., said the problem with flounder and other fisheries is water quality and that hatcheries could produce the needed fish. He said the increase in license fees should be used to help enhance our fisheries and that the Cedar Island WAMI site is perfect place for a flounder hatchery.

Paul Rudenshauser said for flounder the commission should increase size limits to give more reproductive success, increase the mesh size in gill nets and require use of circle hooks when fishing with natural bait.

BUSINESS MEETING - MOTIONS AND ACTIONS – May 21-22

Chairman Sammy Corbett convened the Marine Fisheries Commission business meeting at 9 a.m. and reminded commissioners of their ethics requirements.

The following commission members were in attendance: Sammy Corbett-Chairman, Anna Beckwith-Vice Chair, Mikey Daniels, Kelly Darden, Mark Gorges, Chuck Laughridge, Joe Shute, Mike Wicker and Alison Willis.

Chairman Corbett announced he was adding a report and request for funding from the Conservation Fund Committee to the agenda and was tabling the discussion of commission initiatives.

The modified agenda was approved by consensus.

Motion by Chuck Laughridge to approve the meeting minutes. Motion seconded by Mark Gorges.

Motion passes unanimously.

Public Comment

Tom Roller, with the N.C. Guides Association, asked for a complete closure of the large mesh flounder fishery, increase the commercial size limit to 15 inches, require 6-inch escape panels in pound nets, a moratorium on new pound net permits until the southern flounder stock is recovered, cap the pound net harvest at the current level and no further restrictions on recreational fishermen. Roller also encouraged the commission to take only written comments on the supplement rather than having a contentious public meeting.

Mike Pedersen, with the N.C. Guides Association, said North Carolina is the only state that still maintains a gill net fishery and that is why the IFA refuses to have a tournament here. He said he was from a commercial fishing family, but realized that commercial fishing was no longer a viable trade and that is why he went into the charter business. He called for a complete closure of the large mesh flounder fishery, increase the commercial size limit to 15 inches, require 6-inch escape panels in pound nets, a moratorium on new pound net permits until the southern flounder stock is recovered, cap the pound net harvest at the current level and no further restrictions on recreational fishermen.

Chad Davis, with the N.C. Guides Association, said the recreational sector had to endure all the cuts over the years with flounder and that the commission needed to remove large mesh gill nets because there is better, less destructive gear available. He said a total allowable catch was needed for the commercial sector and he did not support any reductions to recreational fishery.

Allen Jernigan, with the N.C. Guides Association, asked the commission to manage for the resource and not for maximum commercial extraction. He said the easiest solution for flounder

was to get rid of large mesh gill nets and put a moratorium on pound nets, and that the recreational sector has given all it can give.

Capt. Charlie Schoonmaker, from Carolina Beach, said he just wanted what is best for the resource, and if we take care of the resource, it can then take care of all the fishermen.

Dave Timpy, with the Recreational Fishing Alliance, thanked staff for the work they had done putting together information for the flounder supplement. He said there was an inequity in the harvest that is not fair, and because of that, he does not support any further cuts in the recreational sector. He said he would like to modify the supplement to include options from Recreational Fishing Alliance, including elimination of large-mesh gill nets.

Bob Woodard, chair of the Dare County Commission, said N.C. watermen are struggling to survive against regulations and imports. He asked the commission to consider social and economic impacts and to make decisions based on peer-reviewed science. On every issue that arises, he encouraged the commission to get input from watermen. He closed by saying he was against mandatory logbooks and opposed the use of a supplement to reduce flounder catch.

Bud Abbott, with the Coastal Conservation Association-N.C., referenced a letter from Tim Nifong and said he did not think the options presented by the Division of Marine Fisheries for the flounder supplement go far enough to ensure the continued viability of the stock. He encouraged the commission to use its full statutory authority to regulate overfishing and in his opinion, nothing is off limits. He closed by saying that allocation of the resource should be for all citizens and the commission should set aside a reasonable allocation of flounder in a non-harvest conservation pool for non-fishing citizens.

Chris Elkins, with the Coastal Conservation Association-N.C., spoke regarding the southern flounder supplement saying his organization does not think any of the options presented by Division of Marine Fisheries would restore southern flounder stocks and the commission is not limited in actions it deems necessary. He called for the closure of large-mesh gill net fisheries, or at a minimum of April 15 through Feb. 15 closure; a total allowable catch that would achieve a 50 percent reduction; increasing the commercial size limit to 15 inches and increasing escape panels in pound nets to 6 inches; a moratorium on pound nets; and no changes to recreational regulations. He said once the fishery is recovered, based on a coast wide assessment, the allocation should be split 50-50 between the two sectors.

Fred Walker, from Pender County, was concerned about how few fish there are in coastal waters, especially flounder. He said the southern flounder supplement should include a total closure of commercial gill nets, a closure all commercial fishing for flounder from Nov. 16-Dec. 21 and an increase in the commercial size limit to 15 inches. He said there should be no additional restrictions for the recreational sector.

Mike Blanton, from the Albemarle Sound area, said he was concerned the commission was making knee-jerk reactions regarding flounder. He said the division says there is no flounder, but his trip tickets don't say that. He said nine counties were against the supplement and those counties have lots of tourists that want to eat fresh flounder. He felt growing more fish in hatcheries could improve stocks and he asked the commission to make wise decisions for everyone, not just recreational fishermen.

Jason White is a commercial flounder fishermen who says he's got trip tickets to prove there is no depletion in flounder and that the only depletion he's had comes from restrictions taking a third of his net.

Robert Schoonmaker, with the Recreational Fishing Alliance, supports the flounder supplement with modifications in the letter he submitted. He did not want to have a reduction in the recreational bag limit, saying he had customers going to Virginia because they can keep more flounder there. He asked the commission to make a motion to do away with the for-hire logbook at this meeting that would send a clear message to the for-hire sector that you want to work with us.

Terry Pratt, with the Albemarle Fishermen's Association, said the amendment is a better process and it would give time for people to find a solution for southern flounder and that stakeholders should have opportunity to provide input. He then read a resolution from Bertie County that did not support the use of the supplement process.

Butch Martin, with the Carolina Beach Fishing Club, asked the commission not to make any changes with flounder and leave it alone for now.

Jerry Schill, with the N.C. Fisheries Association, said the supplement process was enacted by the N.C. General Assembly to allow the commission to address issues needing immediate action. He understands the need to address critical or emergency situations, but said it was important for the commission to choose wisely. He knows there are areas of concern with southern flounder, but that an amendment was the appropriate course to take. Based upon the science, there is no crisis or emergency for southern flounder that would require a supplement.

David Hilton, with the Ocracoke Working Watermen's Association, said the commission should proceed with the amendment process for flounder and that fishermen are willing to work with the Division of Marine Fisheries to provide needed comment and input.

Jonathan Weeks said North Carolina needs to get rid of the damaging gear and that a lot of recreational fishermen hold a commercial license to circumvent the bag limits - that they don't sell their fish.

Jerry James, member of the Finfish Advisory Committee, and former co-chair of the committee that helped develop the last amendment on southern flounder, talked about how challenging it was coming up with management options and trying to determine the impacts of the sea turtle settlement agreement. He said he supported the supplement process and that the commission needed to provide for escapement to allow flounder to get offshore and spawn. If we don't do something, he said, we will not have a problem with southern flounder because there won't be any.

Rick Sasser says he submitted nine pages of public comment that clearly shows there is a problem with southern flounder. He said the commission should put the resource first, and be conservative and that the recreational sector had given all the blood to date. Future cuts, he said, must come from the sector taking 80 percent of the fish and that a total allowable catch or a quota is needed.

Mark Cogdell, from Wilmington, said he supported a modified supplement, that a lot of public input and comment was needed.

Brent Fulcher, with the N.C. Fisheries Association, requested the commission vote to begin an amendment for southern flounder as soon as possible. He said the long term viability of the flounder fishery is not threatened, so a supplement is not needed. He also said not one recreational fisherman has spoken about their discard mortality and he thinks the recreational size limit should be lowered and bag limit increased.

Lauren Morris, with the N.C. Fisheries Association, said the law requires guidance criteria. The fishery management plan guidelines say a supplement is to be conducted only if an amendment is impossible. They are guidelines not law, but are intended to be predictable for the people you are managing. She was surprised to hear Dr. Daniel said a 40 percent reduction was needed because she doesn't see it in writing in any of the division options. Think amendment could be done in six to eight months if the internal Division of Marine Fisheries fat in the process was cut and that public input is vitally important.

Wally Overman, vice chair of the Dare County Commission, said he was trying to prevent loss of jobs, heritage and a public resource and trying to sustain the economic vitality of fishing communities as a result of an over regulating, over reaching and overzealous group intent on trying to change rules on a whim with a complete lack of science. He said he had yet to attend a fisheries meeting where the industry was supported and that was making the commercial fisherman an endangered species. He said the data shows there is more fish.

Jeff Wolfe, from the Cape Fear area, wants to keep recreational limits as they are. He said if you keep cutting recreational flounder fishermen, people will go to other states.

Dennis Barbour, from Carolina Beach, opposed any new flounder restrictions on recreational fishermen, especially when they harvest such a small percentage of the overall catch.

David Sneed, with the Coastal Conservation Association – N.C., supported the comments of other pro-resource groups and said there were resolutions from eight local government entities in support of going forward with the flounder supplement process. He also felt the commission should only take written comment on the supplement proposals to avoid intimidation and mob mentality that he felt would occur at a public meeting.

John Gjertsen, from New Bern, said he doesn't fish, but eats locally caught seafood. He said this is a repeat of what he has seen for years and that one industry is using their right to petition government to strangle another. He supported moving forward with an amendment for flounder, and not a supplement.

David Knight, with the N.C. Wildlife Federation, talked about that organization's Sound Solutions campaign and said at least a 40 percent reduction was needed in southern flounder harvest until an amendment is in place. He encouraged the commission to put all reasonable options for a supplement on the table for public comment and the main reduction must come from gill nets.

Jeffery Aiken, from Hatteras, said people love flounder and we need to protect them. He was always troubled by “best available science” because it may be bad science. He encouraged the commission to take the time to analyze and improve the data and was troubled that the scientist said he wished he had better science. He did not support the supplement process because it lacks public input.

Matt Wirtt, from Wilmington, supported the supplement process for southern flounder, wanting a 15-inch size limit for everyone and to close all fisheries in December. He wanted the commission to vote to do away with the for-hire logbook requirement at this meeting and he said most recreational fishermen hold a commercial license to get tax breaks.

Kenneth Register said there had previously been comments about undersized giggered fish being a problem, but that was not true - giggers could see how big a flounder was. He didn't understand why some fish markets had undersized flounder.

Jonathan Robinson, a Carteret County Commissioner, did not support the supplement process for flounder and talked about the Fisheries Reform Act.

Pam Morris, with Carteret Catch and member of the Southern Advisory Committee, said consumers are the largest user group of flounder and the only way they have access, is to catch one themselves, or through a commercial fishermen. She feels the supplement process being considered is reactionary and not based on sound science and that gill nets are being vilified and they are just as selective as hook-and-line and other gears. She said she has been commenting at commission meetings for years and has never seen a situation where people should feel afraid.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Corbett asked commission liaison Nancy Fish to review letters that were received and sent on various issues since the last commission meeting last meeting. Fish also reminded the commission of its ethics training requirements.

The commission was reminded of its 2015 business meeting schedule:

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| Feb. 18-20 | Hilton Riverside, Wilmington |
| May 20-22 | Hilton Riverfront, New Bern |
| Aug. 19-21 | Hilton Brownstone, Raleigh |
| Nov. 18-20 | Jennette's Pier, Nags Head |

Issues from Commissioners

Commissioner Chuck Laughridge talked about inaccuracies in public comment and talked about economics and no science. He said if local government representatives wanted the commission to manage for economics he would be happy to do that. The General Assembly would need to change statutes to say we would manage for maximum economic yield. He pointed out that the economic impact of southern flounder for the commercial industry was \$17.482 million, while the recreational impact was \$42.009 million. He also said that two out of three peer reviewers said the data in the stock assessment was appropriate to be used for management for the next five years and that if anyone says there is not a problem with southern flounder, he is not sure what type of crazy you actually have, but he admires your commitment to it.

Chairman Corbett said that in the school he went to, that two out of three was a little more than 66 percent, and that was not a passing grade. Commissioner Laughridge said we could apply another set of data, which is a flip of a coin, which is how we manage fisheries in North Carolina by statute.

Commissioner Joe Shute said he was on the first two Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Advisory Committees and that those committees put forward recommendations to help end overfishing, but the commission did not act on those recommendations and that more should have been done at that time to address problems. We are in a bad situation now because we have not done anything to reduce harvesting southern flounder before they have had the chance to spawn.

Commissioner Laughridge asked Director Daniel if we had the data to show a supplement was needed.

Director Daniel said there had been a lot of discussion about the division position and that the division does not have a position on southern flounder, that it was up to the commission and it was the commission's supplement. He explained that the stock assessment did not pass peer review because it was determined that southern flounder was a Southeast Atlantic regional stock and not a stock that was solely contained in North Carolina waters. However, the peer reviewers did say the data could be used for management purposes.

Chairman Corbett asked everyone to hold their discussion about southern flounder until later in the meeting.

Commissioner Laughridge said the largest user group is the public and if everyone wanted to know how this largest user group felt this issue should be handled by a referendum.

Commissioner Alison Willis requested that staff provide copies of presentations earlier and that charts either needed to be printed in color or be able to be read in black and white. She also said with the references made to mob mentality were upsetting; that people on both sides have issues and it was okay to respectfully disagree. She encouraged people to put negativity aside and sit down together and have positive conversations. She also was concerned that people kept implying there were no commercial fishermen on the board – she said there were three commercial members – herself, Chairman Corbett and Commissioner Mikey Daniels.

Committee Reports

The commission received minutes from all of the advisory committees that had met since the last commission meeting and received the following reports from advisory committees that had action items:

Director Daniel reported that the Coastal Recreational Fishing License Committee had approved funding for 11 ongoing Coastal Recreational Fishing License Grant projects in the amount of \$1,148,427 and they also approved the 2015 Request for Proposals for the upcoming grant cycle that will be released June 1, 2015.

Commission Liaison Nancy Fish reported on a recommendation from the commission's Conservation Fund Committee to provide up to \$10,000 from the Conservation Fund for the James Francesconi Memorial Artificial Reef project.

Motion by Chuck Laughridge to fund up to \$10,000 from the Conservation Fund for the James Francesconi Memorial Artificial Reef project. Motion seconded by Anna Beckwith. Motion passes unanimously.

2014 Landings

The commission received presentation on both the commercial and recreational catch and effort for 2014. These presentations can be accessed on the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries website at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/may-2015-briefing-book>.

Fishery Management Plan Update

Catherine Blum, the division's fishery management plan coordinator, reviewed the status of various state and interjurisdictional fishery management plans and reviewed changes to the timeline for the Oyster and Clam fishery management plans.

Southern Flounder

The commission received a presentation from division biologists Tom Wadsworth and Chris Stewart on data and options to be considered for a supplement to the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Amendment 1. The commission chose six potential management proposals to include in a draft supplement that the commission will put out for public review.

The presentation and the options can be found on the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries website at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/may-2015-briefing-book>.

The commission decided to hold a public comment period from June 10 to July 10 and include a public meeting during that timeframe as well.

Motion by Alison Willis to terminate the supplement process and request the secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to immediately modify the existing Fishery Management Plan Schedule to move forward with an expedited amendment process based on the regionality and complexity of the fishery. Motion seconded by Mikey Daniels.

Motion fails 2-6.

Amended motion offered by Chuck Laughridge to replace "to terminate the supplement process" with "and request the secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to immediately modify the existing Fishery Management Plan Schedule to move forward with an expedited amendment process based on regionality and complexity of the fishery." Motion seconded by Mikey Daniels.

Motion withdrawn.

Motion by Chuck Laughridge to proceed with a supplement, presenting the six options, and ask the secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to proceed with an amendment. Motion seconded by Kelly Darden.

Motion passes 8-0.

Motion by Alison Willis to direct the Division of Marine Fisheries to hold three public meetings (northern, central, southern) on the draft Southern Flounder Supplement and

direct the division and its staff to present the draft supplement. Motion seconded by Mikey Daniels.

Motion withdrawn.

Friendly amendment by Chuck Laughridge to direct the Division of Marine Fisheries to hold one Marine Fisheries Commission meeting at a central location to receive public comment on the draft Southern Flounder Supplement.

Motion postponed.

Motion withdrawn.

Spotted Seatrout

The commission received a presentation from the division biologists Laura Lee and Mike Loeffler on the most recent stock assessment that showed that the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Based on the positive stock assessment, the commission decided to review the N.C. Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan in 2017 instead of this year, aligning the review with a statutorily required five-year review schedule.

The presentation can be found on the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries website at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/may-2015-briefing-book>.

Motion by Anna Beckwith to direct the Division of Marine Fisheries to prepare the Marine Fisheries Commission's annual Fishery Management Plan Schedule for its August 2015 business meeting to reflect the review of the Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan to begin in 2017. Motion seconded by Chuck Laughridge.

Motion passes 7-0.

Kingfish

The commission received a presentation from division biologists Beth Egbert and Kevin Brown on the N.C. Kingfish Fishery Management Plan. The commission decided to proceed with an information update to the plan, which means no management changes are proposed.

The presentation can be found on the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries website at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/may-2015-briefing-book>.

Motion by Chuck Laughridge to proceed with the Kingfish Fishery Management Plan review as an information update. Motion seconded by Alison Willis.

Motion passes 8-0.

Brad Scott Timeline

Director Daniel and Shellfish Sanitation Section Chief Patti Fowler presented the commission with a timeline and information on interactions the division and the commission have had with Mr. Brad Scott related to his desire to culture or grow shellfish in prohibited areas.

The presentation can be found on the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries website at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/may-2015-briefing-book>.

Sheepshead

Division biologist supervisor Stephen Taylor reviewed the input received from the Northern, Southern and Finfish advisory committees on several management options for sheepshead.

Sheepshead is a highly sought recreational fish and is caught in a variety of commercial fisheries. Until 2012, sheepshead was managed under the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan, and was included in a 20-fish snapper-grouper recreational bag limit aggregate. When sheepshead was removed from the South Atlantic plan, management of the fishery was left up to the state.

The presentation can be found on the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries website at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/may-2015-briefing-book>.

The commission chose the following management measures for sheepshead:

- 10-inch fork length minimum size limit (all commercial and recreational fisheries)
- 10-fish bag limit (recreational)
- 10-fish per person per day limit or per trip limit if multi-day trip (commercial spears and gigs)
- 300-pound trip limit (all other commercial gears, except pound nets)

Motion by Mike Wicker to implement a 10-fish recreational bag limit for sheepshead and 10-fish bag limit for all spearing or gigging of sheepshead. Motion seconded by Mikey Daniels.

Motion withdrawn.

Motion by Anna Beckwith to support the Division of Marine Fisheries' position for sheepshead of a 10-inch fork length minimum size limit for both the recreational and commercial sectors; a 10-fish bag limit for recreational sector; a 10-fish limit for commercial spears and gigs, per person per day or per trip if a trip occurs over more than one calendar day; and a 300-pound commercial trip limit for all other gears, exempting pound nets from the commercial trip limit. Motion seconded by Chuck Laughridge. Motion passes 4-2, with one abstention.

Motion by Alison Willis to amend the motion by Anna Beckwith and strike commercial trip limits, except for spearfishing and gigging. Motion seconded by Mikey Daniels. Motion fails 3-4.

Substitute motion by Chuck Laughridge to Allison Willis' motion that accepts the Division of Marine Fisheries' position. Motion fails for lack of second.

Rulemaking

Catherine Blum, the division's rulemaking coordinator, provided an overview of the 2014/2015 rulemaking cycle and reviewed the text of three proposed rules and associated fiscal analyses for proposed rules for adoption of an amendment to the N.C. Striped Mullet Fishery Management Plan and clarification of a rule for dredges and mechanical methods prohibited areas for harvesting shellfish in internal coastal waters.

The commission approved the notice of text and fiscal impact analysis to go to public hearing later this year.

Motion by Chuck Laughridge to approve notice of text for rulemaking and the associated regulatory impact analysis for the N.C. Striped Mullet Fishery Management Plan Amendment 1. Motion seconded by Kelly Darden.

Motion passes 6-1.

Motion by Chuck Laughridge to approve notice of text for rulemaking and the associated regulatory impact analysis for 15A NCAC 03R .0108. Motion seconded by Kelly Darden.

Motion passes 6-1.

Issues from Commissioners

Commissioner Kelly Darden announced he would not seek reappointment to the commission once his term expired on June 30, 2015, because he was planning on moving out-of-state.

The meeting adjourned.