

N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission
May 2025 Quarterly Business Meeting
Online Public Comment

Name	State	Comments
Randall Janutolo	North Carolina	Gentleman, As an avid pier and surf fisherman, I would ask you to make amendments to your existing season and quota limits on fish caught from shore. My friends and I travel to the coast, spending time and \$, boosting the local economy. The neighbouring states are looking more inviting every year. If you guys were politicians, we would vote you out of office.
Mike Hill	North Carolina	<p>I retired in 2024, after 35 years in the NC fire service, with life long dreams of spending my retirement years in fishing Carteret County. Flounder fishing has always been my passion. Same as my Dad. Now I find myself retired and boy did my plans not work out. I have abandoned my property in NC and moved it to Little River, SC. What a shame. What is worse is that my 80 year old dad has been diagnosed with liver cancer. It doesn't look like he will ever be able to catch and keep a NC flounder again. Retirement sure doesn't look like I thought it would. Please reinstate a liberal flounder season in NC. There doesn't appear to be a shortage from the fisherman's perspective. I can catch them at will and my catch has never been surveyed in over 50 years of fishing. I wonder where does the statistics come from. I'm the meantime, I'll keep supporting South Carolina fisheries.but I would like to come home and fish with my Dad.</p> <p>Mike Hill</p>
Rickie Black	North Carolina	My hope is to continue enjoy nc coastal waters with my family as I've done for generations not being able to provide a week vacation with my family in advance because of lack of season dates for a species we enjoy catching and preparing for a family meal is not acceptable.
Barry Brittingham	Delaware	i travel to the outer banks 6-8 times a year for fishing vacations and spend a lot of money aka dollars on lodging, restaurants and all other services and yet each year my ability to keep a fish or two for a dinner one night gets less and less. You need to realize the rec fisherman spends more money in the local economy than the commercial fisherman and start allocating the amount of catch the recs are allowed. I will go spend all my money elsewhere if it doesn't change.

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		<p>Regards Barry</p>
Stuart Creighton	North Carolina	<p>Good morning,</p> <p>There are several issues of concern at next week's upcoming meeting. I'll try to address each one separately in the paragraphs below.</p> <p>Perhaps the most pressing is the pending vote on Southern Flounder Amendment 4. At the request of the MFC, a point that should resonate with each commissioner, consideration will be given to shifting the allocation to an even 50/50 split between both principal user groups. This measure should be approved for several reasons, the most important being that when Amendment 3 was approved, the allocation was inequitable from the moment of its inception. Facing Draconian cuts of 72% was difficult enough, but when the user group that clearly caused the problem was given 70% of the dramatically reduced quota, the issue of fairness once again reared its head. When an initial plan to phase in the 50/50 allocation was delayed for an additional three years by a last minute vote of a previous iteration of the MFC, public anglers were dealt another blow that would be difficult to manage. That difficulty was further complicated when MRIP estimates were going to be used to manage the quota, something they were never intended to do.</p> <p>As you were cautioned against repeatedly, and as the previous years of attempted management have shown, bycatch ESTIMATES and overages have crippled a once thriving \$250 million economic driver to eastern NC. For those that would criticize the public sector for going over their paltry quota every year, consider some simple math regarding the situation. If only 300,000 of the 1.2 million licensed anglers in NC come visit the coast to fish for flounder for ONLY one day, and they take home ONLY one flounder that weighs an average of 2 pounds (certainly reasonable), then recreational anglers have now caught 600,000 pounds of flounder and will be shut out of the fishery for the next several years. When bycatch estimates that continue to grow as southern flounder recover are added to that fictitious estimate, then an even longer period of no access to the fishery would occur. I think it shows admirable restraint that only 200,000 pounds of flounder have been caught on average per year by recreational anglers.</p> <p>It is also important to note that without species specific management, public anglers are being penalized for catching summer and gulf flounder that are being counted as southern flounder. To what degree is unknown, because that information is not currently tracked.</p>

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		<p>Moving the allocation to 50/50 a year early does make sense. It gives the largest user group in the state a fair chance at keeping access to a very important fishery until more long term measures can be provided through Amendment 5.</p> <p>Stock assessment updates on blue crab show a disturbing trend, especially with recruitment and the number of spawning female crabs. They show that the previously enacted 2% reduction in harvest isn't working, and that a 21% reduction in harvest is now necessary to end the overfished/overfishing status of crabs. While it is true that this update was not approved by peer reviewers as a stand alone management measure, the trends, including harvest, should not be ignored. What should be most concerning is that waiting for verification by the next benchmark stock assessment would likely result in a needed reduction in harvest of up to 50%. Consideration should be given to the management debacle we are currently experiencing with southern flounder. At the behest of the NCFA, years of overharvest were ignored, management actions were diluted and delayed until massive cuts were unavoidable. Blue crab will likely follow a parallel course unless this MFC takes appropriate action now.</p> <p>Finally, the striped bass issue is about to surface once again. Population studies on whether or not CSMA stripers are self sustaining will be explained as will the assessment of the effectiveness of the gill net ban in areas of these rivers. Several questions have to be asked about the studies, among them are: where and when and with what frequency were stripers sampled; have the striper populations expanded; has there been a noticeable increase in size of the striped bass; have impacts to other species been examined? It is important to remember that it takes 9-10 years to grow a striper to peak fecundity, have we given them enough time in five years to reach a large enough size?</p> <p>If, ultimately, it is determined that CSMA stripers will not be able to be returned to a self-sustaining population, then access becomes an important issue. With the regulations and restrictions governing access to stocked fish, it remains a legitimate point that gill netting restrictions should continue as commercial access to stocked fish is questionable, at best.</p> <p>Stuart Creighton Oriental, NC</p>

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Jefferson Rives	North Carolina	<p>Dear Members of the Marine Fisheries Commission,</p> <p>As a North Carolinian who cherishes our coastal fisheries, I urge you to adopt policies that secure the long-term health of our public waters for all—recreational anglers and commercial fishermen alike. Your decisions on Southern Flounder Amendment 4, blue crab management, and habitat protection are critical. I support sustainable commercial fishing but believe urgent, data-driven action is essential to prevent excessive fish mortality and protect our ecosystems. Below, I’ve expanded each point with detailed evidence to strengthen the case for sustainability.</p> <p>Support Southern Flounder Amendment 4: A 50/50 Split in 2025</p> <p>I strongly endorse Amendment 4, which shifts the southern flounder allocation to a 50/50 split between recreational and commercial sectors starting in 2025, rather than delaying to 2026. This adjustment is equitable and vital, backed by compelling data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation Breakdown: The current 70/30 split allocates 372,648 pounds to commercial fishermen and 159,706 pounds to recreational anglers from the 532,354-pound total allowable catch (TAC). Amendment 4 adjusts this to 266,176 pounds per sector, balancing access to this public resource. • Economic Impact: Recreational fishing contributes \$4.2 billion annually to North Carolina’s economy and supports 41,000 jobs (2022 NOAA Fisheries Report), dwarfing the commercial sector’s \$69 million in landings and 1,200 jobs (2023 DMF data). A 50/50 split aligns with this economic reality while preserving commercial viability. • Stock Decline: The 2019 stock assessment revealed a 68% reduction in spawning stock biomass since the 1980s, with overfishing occurring at a rate 2.5 times the sustainable level. Commercial gillnets accounted for 62% of landings (2015-2019 average), driving this decline. • Rebuilding Timeline: Amendment 3 mandates stock recovery by 2032, requiring a 72% harvest reduction from 2017 levels (1.9 million pounds). The 50/50 split accelerates this by redistributing pressure across sectors. <p>This change ensures fairness and supports recovery for all users.</p> <p>Act on Blue Crab: Support the 21% Harvest Reduction</p>

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		<p>The blue crab fishery faces a critical juncture, and I urge you to adopt the Division of Marine Fisheries' (DMF) proposed 21% harvest reduction. The data underscores the urgency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stock Assessment: The 2023 update found a 34% decline in spawning stock biomass since 2010, with 2023 levels at 66 million pounds—30% below the 94-million-pound sustainability threshold. Recruitment dropped 41% from the 1990-2010 average. • Overfishing Evidence: Harvests averaged 28 million pounds annually (2018-2022), exceeding the 22-million-pound sustainable yield. Females comprised 45% of landings in 2023, threatening future spawning. • Consequences of Delay: DMF models predict that without a 21% cut (reducing landings to 22 million pounds), biomass could fall to 40 million pounds by 2027, necessitating a 50% reduction (14 million pounds) to avoid collapse. • Management Success: A 2008 female harvest ban increased spawning stock by 19% within two years, per DMF records. <p>This reduction is a proactive step to avert disaster for crabbers and anglers alike.</p> <p>Use Your Habitat Management Authority to Protect Ecosystems</p> <p>The MFC's authority over habitat management is a powerful tool, and I urge you to wield it to protect vital ecosystems, including Pamlico Sound, with concrete actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Mandate: The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP), adopted in 2005 and revised in 2016, empowers the MFC to regulate fishing to protect habitats like seagrass, wetlands, and oyster reefs. These areas support 75% of commercial species (DMF 2022). • Pamlico Sound Actions: The 2016 trawling restrictions in Pamlico Sound preserved 12,000 acres of seagrass, boosting juvenile flounder survival by 18% (2020 DMF study). Seagrass has declined 30% since 1980 (48,000 acres lost), per aerial surveys. • Habitat Loss Data: Oyster reefs have shrunk by 54% since 1900 (from 500,000 to 230,000 acres), reducing fish nursery capacity by 40%. Wetland losses average 1,200 acres annually (1990-2020, NOAA). • Restoration Impact: The 2021 CHPP report estimates that restoring 10,000 acres of habitat could increase fish biomass by 22% within five years. <p>Expanding protections now is critical to sustaining fisheries.</p>

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		<p>Help Commercial Fishermen Adapt Sustainably</p> <p>Sustainable commercial fishing is achievable with targeted support. Here's how data-backed measures can help fishermen adapt while reducing ecological harm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gear Modifications: • Bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) cut bycatch by 40-60% (NOAA 2021), saving 1.2 million juvenile fish annually in North Carolina shrimp trawls (2022 DMF). Virginia's 2024 \$500,000 gear grant aided 200 fishermen, maintaining 85% of shrimp yields. • Pot fishing trials in 2023 reduced seabed damage by 30% compared to trawls (UNC study). • Area Closures: • Florida's 1995 nursery closures increased juvenile flounder survival by 20%, lifting landings by 15% within a decade. North Carolina's 2019 Croatan Sound closure boosted red drum juveniles by 12%. • No-trawl zones in 15% of Pamlico Sound could protect 18,000 acres of habitat (DMF 2023). • Quota Management: • The Atlantic sea scallop fishery's 2001 quotas rebuilt stocks by 2020, yielding \$570 million annually. North Carolina's 2022 kingfish quota (150,000 pounds) kept harvests 10% below overfishing levels. • Trip limits of 500 pounds for flounder reduced discards by 14% in 2023 (DMF). • Education and Training: • DMF's 2023 workshops trained 300 fishermen, cutting bycatch by 15%. Online gear tutorials reached 1,200 users in 2024. • Economic Support: • Maryland's \$1 million 2024 fund transitioned 150 fishermen to sustainable gear, preserving 90% of incomes. North Carolina's 2022 \$200,000 pilot grant aided 50 crabbers. • Research and Innovation: • Gulf shrimpers' 2022 bycatch app reduced discards by 30% (1.5 million pounds). North Carolina's 2023 tagging program engaged 80 fishermen, improving stock data by 25%. <p>These steps secure a future for commercial fishing without exhausting resources.</p> <p>Protect Habitats and Prey for Resilient Fisheries</p> <p>Robust ecosystems underpin healthy fisheries. I urge you to prioritize habitat and prey protection with these</p>

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		<p>evidence-based actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat Restoration: • The Oyster Sanctuary program restored 50 acres since 2018, increasing fish abundance by 15% within 1,000 yards (2023 DMF). Expanding to 100 acres by 2030 could yield 2 million more fish annually. • Back Sound’s 2021 seagrass project (20 acres) boosted juvenile crabs by 25% and flounder by 18% (2023 survey). • Reduce Bycatch and Protect Prey: • Shrimp trawling discarded 22 million pounds of bycatch in 2020 (DMF), including 4 million juvenile flounder and 3 million crabs. BRDs could save 50% of this, per NOAA trials. • Menhaden landings hit 150 million pounds in 2022, yet predator fish biomass dropped 12% (2021 ECU study). A 20% harvest cut could lift flounder yields by 10% (DMF model). <p>These efforts ensure a thriving food web for all fishery users.</p> <p>My Call to Action</p> <p>Please act decisively to safeguard our fisheries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve Amendment 4 for a 50/50 flounder split in 2025. • Implement the 21% blue crab reduction to avert collapse. • Leverage habitat authority to protect Pamlico Sound and beyond. • Support commercial fishermen with grants, training, and innovation. • Enhance habitat and prey protection for long-term resilience. <p>Our fisheries are a collective legacy. Let’s manage them with science and equity. Thank you.</p> <p>Sincerely, Jefferson Rives</p>
Jonathan Freeman	Virginia	<p>For mor than 30 years, my family has enjoys vacationing in Kitty Hawk. The entire OBX holds a special place in our hearts. There is no great experience than walking the beaches and casting lures during the sunrise. To see that Flounder, Striped Bass and Speckled Trout are unlawful to keep for recreational fishing is disheartening. To many, the OBX is that magical place where fishing stories are made. If this ban continues, you will see less and less people coming to the OBX. That means less tackle shops will be in business, less restaurants will be</p>

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		<p>in business, less hotels will be in business. Basically, less tourism dollars!!</p> <p>As a resident of Virginia, I'm seeing more and more vehicles with NC tags fishing along the beaches (from Chincoteague to Sand Bridge) during the fishing season. I hope NC state is looking at the bigger picture. Please understand that people like us do not have to visit NC to spend money. We can travel to other states to vacation, fish and have fun. I know Virginia would love for more people to visit. I'm sure South Carolina would love more tourism dollars as well.</p> <p>Thanks Jonathan</p>
Terry Willard	North Carolina	<p>Can you please consider the revenue that recreational fishing brings to our coast. We have been vacationing along the North Carolina coast for the last 40 years. We spend at least \$3500 minimum per/trip. Last year, we were forced to go to SC to flounder gig. We would appreciate your consideration regarding the allowance of flounder gigging for at least a few weeks this season. We always look forward to visiting the Crystal Coast and have made so many happy memories there with our family! Thank you!</p>
Patrick carroll	North Carolina	<p>Why is craving not allowed in wilson bay park in jacksonville nc. It's full of crabs, each time people fish they pull in a crab</p>
Barbara Garrity-Blake	North Carolina	<p>May 19, 2025</p> <p>To: North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission From: Barbara Garrity-Blake, President, NC Catch Re: Blue Crab FMP Draft Amendment 3</p> <p>NC Catch, a non-profit dedicated to raising consumer awareness about the benefits of eating local seafood, recommends that North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission members reject the proposed adaptive measures for Amendment 3 of the Blue Crab FMP by the Division of Marine Fisheries.</p> <p>Blue crabs support North Carolina's most important commercial fishery, supplying both live crabs and picked</p>

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		<p>meat to seafood consumers along the Atlantic coast. Landings have been stable or shown slight increases in recent years even as fishing effort has declined.</p> <p>We are concerned that the DMF is proposing a 12-52% reduction in commercial blue crab harvest without having a valid population assessment. Multiple MFC Advisory Committees do not support the proposed restrictions, indicating a lack of stakeholder consensus for the measures.</p> <p>Proposing such drastic measures introduces unnecessary uncertainty to an already stressed seafood industry. Enacting the measures would deprive North Carolina fishermen of their most valuable fishery in the state, and deprive seafood restaurants, markets, and consumers access to a wildly popular source of protein.</p> <p>We urge you to reject the proposed actions in the Blue Crab FMP Draft Amendment 3, ensure that a valid stock assessment is undertaken, and work with the industry to ensure participatory management that benefits the resource as well as harvesters and the seafood consuming public.</p>
Kenneth Elliott	North Carolina	<p>Thanks and hoping to see flounder season nearshore and inshore July to September at a minimum</p>
Kathy Gainey	North Carolina	<p>A family should be able to keep fish (trout or flounder) to feed themselves. Being forced to buy fish to eat is not acceptable for numerous reasons. North Carolinians should not have to buy fish to have it available for a healthy diet; catching your own fish insures safe handling of the fish you consume rather than counting on commercial fishermen and fish houses to follow safe handling procedures. Inshore net fishing is basically the same as hunting in a nursery. Other southern states are able to manage their fisheries without such ludicrous policies as prohibiting citizens from keeping the fish that they catch to feed their families. Additionally, recreational fishermen pay a fee for their fishing license but are prohibited from keeping their catch. Commercial fishermen do not suffer this penalty. As a lifetime recreational fishing license holder, your current policy is a retroactively punitive on me and my family. Please reconsider your ban on allowing recreational</p>

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		fishermen from keeping what is rightfully their natural resource as a tax-paying citizen of NC and consider banning inshore gill nets instead.
Jerry James	North Carolina	Open up flounder More more than I can ever remember. This is crazy. Va and SC Are open. Why not us total incompetence
Betsy may	North Carolina	Please give us back flounder season. And give us more red fish
Conner Barker	District of Columbia	<p>Dear Chairman Corbett and Members of the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission,</p> <p>On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), we thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Amendment 4 to the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan. CSF strongly supports the expedited allocation shift proposed in Amendment 4 to bring parity to the southern flounder fishery between the recreational and commercial sectors.</p> <p>According to a 2020 report by the American Sportfishing Association, recreational saltwater fishing in North Carolina has an economic impact of around \$1.7 billion. Southern flounder is one of the most popular species targeted in North Carolina marine waters, and the lack of recreational access to this fishery in 2024 has undoubtedly had a negative impact on North Carolina's coastal economies. Furthermore, sector allocations should not be static but rather adjusted over time to reflect changes in the fishery and where the greatest value lies from economic, social, and conservation perspectives.</p> <p>While we applaud the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission for moving towards a more equitable distribution of southern flounder allocation as planned in Amendment 3, the recent loss of a full year of southern flounder recreational fishing opportunity warrants the scheduled reallocation be expedited by one year. We respectfully urge your support of Amendment 4.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>

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		<p>Conner Barker</p> <p>Senior Coordinator, Southeastern States (GA, KY, NC, SC and TN)</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>