


**N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission**  
**May 2026 Quarterly Business Meeting**  
**Written Public Comment**

Name	State/Province	Please type your comments in the box below.
Chris Paul Dionigi	North Carolina	<p>I thank the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission for holding these open meetings and taking questions.</p> <p>Tiger shrimp, zebra mussels, gill lice, lionfish, blue catfish, and flathead catfish are among the priority marine invasive species affecting North Carolina. Invasive plants such as hydrilla, Eurasian watermilfoil, and alligator weed also significantly impact wetland and aquatic ecosystems. These invasive species occur across a wide range of locations and habitat types, and both individually and collectively, they greatly limit efforts to recover fishery stocks.</p> <p>Yet, there are only scattered references to invasive species in the fishery management plans.</p> <p>The current release prohibitions and bait regulations are important, and I appreciate that the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan includes invasive species monitoring and tracking. However, the prevention and removal of marine invasive species underpin all fishery management plans and should be addressed through comprehensive planning and multi-sector cooperation.</p> <p>What steps are being taken to comprehensively prevent and control marine invasive species?</p>
Mark Keplinger	North Carolina	<p>Because the sport fisherman are so limited on creel limits and also charged for a license, commercial fisherman should be limited on how close to shore they can fish.</p>
Bennie L Braswell	North Carolina	<p>Greetings,</p> <p>I'm writing my concerns of mismanagement of our fisheries within our state. Apparently regulations implemented over many years have not had positive outcome, with exception of redfish stocks. North Carolina has 2 regulatory agencies that do not work together. N. C. Division of Marine Fisheries has provides recommendations from scientific studies that are mostly ignored by the N. C. Marine Fisheries Commission that makes the regulations. I'm sincerely disappointed to see regulations dictated biased in favor of big commercial entities. This mismanagement arrangement has produced regulations with a distinct bias in favor of commercial fisheries, at the expense of recreational fishermen and N.C. General Public.</p>

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		<p>1. Recreational fisherman have estimated bycatch counted against their quota of harvested fish.</p> <p>2. Commercial fisheries bycatch is not counted against their quota of harvested fish at all.</p> <p>3. I read deeply into the commercial regulations that stated harvested catch sold outside of the state do not count against their quotas. How is this monitored?</p> <p>4. NC is the only state on the east coast that allows trawling and gill netting in our inshore waters. Other states have recognized that this practice destroys the emerging young fishes and fish biomass. Fish stocks do not recover due to this practice!</p> <p>5. Rockfish are not allowed to be harvested by recreational fishermen for the last 3 years in my area.</p> <p>6. Flounder are now not allowed to be harvested by recreational fishermen after several years of reductions. Commercial harvesting continues.</p> <p>7. Speckled trout are now being overfished. Reductions in harvesting have started with commercial bias in place.</p> <p>Going back 20 years or so, people fishing the lower Neuse River, Pamlico Sound were able to catch plenty of fish species. Spot, Croaker, Grey Trout, Striped Bass and other species. These areas are now void of bottom fishes worth catching.</p> <p>Flounder, are allowed to be harvested one per day over a 2 week period by recreational fishing. Grey Trout, one per day. Now Speckled trout are technically being overharvested.</p> <p>I am reminded of the definition of insanity, and plead with you to discontinue allowing mismanagement of our fisheries in this manner. The inland commercial trawling and gill netting will continue to deplete our states fisheries for everyone. Including commercial fisheries!</p> <p>Respectfully.  Bennie L Braswell  </p>
Henry Hagan	Florida	<p>Dear Marine Fisheries Commission</p> <p>While I am a Florida resident, I am a lifetime sportsman in NC. I spend about 5 weeks a year on the NC coast.</p> <p>While the Cormorants can be given credit for a great deal of the reduction of bait fish in the sounds of NC, the bigger problems are your unwillingness to dramatically reduce the Menhaden tonnage limits and the near shore drag netting for shrimp.</p>

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		<p>Please add my name to the list of those who believe you are dramatically underestimating the damage both do to the inshore marine food chain and ecosystem. Add also underestimating the value of sport fishing of all kinds, when compared to the extent you allow for depletion of the resources by not restricting both of the above much more significantly.</p> <p>Thanks! Henry ██████████</p>
John McQuaid	North Carolina	<p>I support strict controls on Atlantic Bonito harvest. We need to err on the side of conservation, not consumption. I favor a 3 fish per day limit.</p> <p>In my opinion, Bonito are best consumed the same day caught, and more than you will eat that day should be released.</p> <p>Thank you</p>
Jerry James	North Carolina	Give us our flounder back. Becoming a trash fish
Paul Rudershausen	North Carolina	<p>I wish to add my voice to the growing concern about potential seasonal over-exploitation of the Atlantic bonito <i>Sarda sarda</i> in North Carolina waters during springtime when animals move northward toward their summer feeding grounds. Very little is known about the movement ecology or stock status of the species and North Carolina waters experience concentrated fishing effort for bonito without any size or bag limits. And this effort is now in an era where the average efficiency of the recreational angler has increased dramatically due to 'spot lock' and other cutting edge electronic devices. It is my hope that the MFC will move on rulemaking to pass the proposed 5-fishper day bag limit; this is a risk-adverse strategy to conserve the stock of the species during an era of rapid growth not only of fishing technologies but in numbers of anglers that target bonito here in state waters.</p>
Matt Sherwood	Texas	We need to protect Atlantic Bonito as no limits are bound to be harmful to the fishery.
Chad Day	Arizona	We only have one chance to protect our environment, it takes years to get it back if we can... We have to take a proactive approach to conservation once its gone it may be gone forever..
Harold McCarter	Virginia	I strongly support proposed rule making for Atlantic Bonito to ensure the continued sustainment of the fishery.

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Dan Leary	New York	<p>Would really like to see proactive conservation of the Bonita fishery. Before it's too late, let's get some protection in place for these important game fish. Would also like to see New York follow suit on this issue as well.</p>
Jarrett Miller	Oklahoma	<p>As someone who cares deeply about our fisheries and the future of Atlantic bonito in North Carolina, I strongly support putting reasonable regulations in place before this fishery is damaged beyond repair. North Carolina now accounts for roughly 22% of the entire coastwide recreational harvest, and landings have exploded in recent years with no bag limits or management measures in place. These fish are too special to be treated like an unlimited resource, especially when we continue seeing anglers keeping excessive numbers simply because they can. A five-fish bag limit is a fair, commonsense step that still allows people to enjoy this incredible fishery while protecting it for the future. I urge the Commission to move this rule forward before we repeat the same mistakes that have hurt so many other fisheries. Thank you.</p>
Clarke Ohrstrom	Virginia	<p>I very much look forward to travelling every year to NC to enjoy catch and release fishing of Atlantic Bonito. Please protect the stocks of these fish so that I and thousands of others can enjoying spending money in your state.</p>
Justin Cooper	Maine	<p>I strongly support the Commission approving the Notice of Text for Atlantic bonito management measures in North Carolina.</p> <p>North Carolina now accounts for approximately 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest. That is a significant share of a shared migratory resource, and our recreational landings have been steadily increasing since 2017, now far exceeding the long-term average. The data alone should make it clear that proactive management is necessary.</p> <p>At present, there are no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina — no recreational bag limit, no minimum size, and no stock assessment. Recreational effort has increased dramatically due to advancements in electronics, social media, and changing angler tactics, yet we continue to manage this fishery with virtually no safeguards in place.</p> <p>Atlantic bonito are especially vulnerable because they often school in dense, short-lived feeding events close to shore. These predictable concentrations allow extremely high harvest rates in a very short amount of time. Over the past several years, it has become increasingly common to see images of anglers retaining over one hundred bonito in a single trip. That is not conservation-</p>

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		<p>minded harvest, and it is certainly not sportsmanship. These fish are excellent table fare when eaten fresh, but they do not freeze well, which increases the likelihood of unnecessary waste of a valuable public resource.</p> <p>The proposed five-fish recreational bag limit is both reasonable and precautionary. Most anglers are not exceeding this amount anyway. The proposal simply establishes responsible guardrails while also providing the Fisheries Director with proclamation authority to respond quickly if conditions change, with Marine Fisheries Commission oversight and public outreach requirements built into the process.</p> <p>Other states are already recognizing the need for action. Massachusetts implemented a 16-inch minimum size and a five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore in 2025, and Rhode Island is actively pursuing similar measures. North Carolina should not become the weak link in the management of this shared coastal resource.</p> <p>This proposal is not about shutting down fishing opportunities. It is about getting ahead of a problem before Atlantic bonito follow the same trajectory as so many other overexploited inshore species. Proactive management protects the resource, preserves recreational opportunity, supports the coastal economy, and ensures future generations of anglers can continue to enjoy this fishery responsibly.</p> <p>The numbers clearly demonstrate why action is warranted. Since 1994, the average annual North Carolina recreational harvest has been approximately 16,500 fish and 77,500 pounds. In 2025 alone, landings reportedly reached approximately 96,000 fish and 303,000 pounds — several times the historical average.</p> <p>I appreciate the work DMF staff put into the issue paper and commend the Commission for taking this important step toward responsible management. I strongly encourage the Commission to approve the Notice of Text and move this rule forward.</p>
Carl Swanson	Massachusetts	Please take the necessary steps to help protect this valuable and vulnerable resource for all to enjoy.

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		Req fishing puts substantial dollars in local economies and over harvesting is a risk for all Eastern Seaboard communities. Time for action please!
Sam Margolin	Maine	<p>North Carolina accounts for 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest. That is a huge share of a shared migratory resource, and our landings have been trending upward since 2017, now exceeding the long-term average.</p> <p>There are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. No size limit, no bag limit, no stock assessment. We are flying blind while recreational effort is rising fast.</p> <p>Atlantic bonito school in dense, short-lived pulses off our coast. This behavior, combined with new technology and changing angler tactics, makes the fishery extremely vulnerable to rapid overharvest if we do nothing.</p> <p>These fish are best eaten fresh. They do not freeze well. Without a limit, we risk significant waste of a high-quality resource that should be conserved for the table, not the trash. Over the past few years, there have been constant images of fishermen retaining over a hundred bonito per trip. This is not impressive. It is disgusting, and no one who does this is a sportsman.</p> <p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule (something anglers are rarely exceeding anyway) while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach required first.</p> <p>Massachusetts already took this exact step in 2025 with a 16-inch minimum size and five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is moving on similar measures. North Carolina should match our neighbors on this shared resource instead of becoming the weak link.</p> <p>This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p>

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		<p>The average landings in NC per year since 1994 are approximately 16,500 fish and 77,500 lbs. In 2025, 96,00 fish were landed and 303,000lbs.</p> <p>We strongly support the Commission approving Notice of Text today so this rule can move forward. Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step.</p>
George Wheeler	Massachusetts	<p>Protecting the stock of bonito with the proposed new limits is essential for preserving the stock. There is the direct conservation of the stock, which is important in its own right, and, the economic value that recreational fishing provides to all states up and down the Atlantic coast. Please make the wise and sound decision to install these new regulations and limits on taking fish.</p> <p>Thanks for your consideration.</p>
Scott Davis	South Carolina	<p>These fish are in dire need of our protection from over harvest. They are an economically important resource to our charter businesses as well as the fishing community/economy as a whole. They span the Atlantic so each state is important! Follow Massachusetts!</p>
Jeanne Kispert	New York	<p>We strongly support the Commission approving Notice of Text today so this rule can move forward. Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step.</p>
eynolds Cowles	Virginia	<p>Please support these very reasonable restrictions</p>
Captain Mike Holliday	Florida	<p>I'm writing to request you put size and bag limits on Atlantic Bonito in North Carolina waters. I run a fly fishing operation that catches and releases these fish and my business is dependent on their population. They're ok when eaten fresh, but not after freezing, so there's no reason to take more than you can eat that night. They're found in tight concentrations, so easy to fish out. Your efforts to protect this fishery will have positive impacts from Florida to Massachusetts. Thank you for taking a leadership role in protecting this species.</p>
Phil Kirkland	Oregon	<p>Atlantic Bonito are special fish and they need to be treated as such. There needs to be proper management set in place before a problem that has gone on for too long goes too far. If we overfish this, there's no turning back. I urge you to put attention to putting a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule (something anglers are rarely exceeding anyway) while</p>

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		giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach required first. Let's do right by the fish and water here.
Mack Hartwell	Ohio	Let's strongly consider some common sense regulations to improve the fisheries for generations to come. Thank you listening.
Kitri Schaefer	Maine	<p>North Carolina accounts for 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest. That is a huge share of a shared migratory resource, and our landings have been trending upward since 2017, now exceeding the long-term average.</p> <p>There are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. No size limit, no bag limit, no stock assessment. We are flying blind while recreational effort is rising fast.</p> <p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule (something anglers are rarely exceeding anyway) while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach required first.</p> <p>This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>The average landings in NC per year since 1994 are approximately 16,500 fish and 77,500 lbs. In 2025, 96,00 fish were landed and 303,000lbs.</p> <p>We strongly support the Commission approving Notice of Text today so this rule can move forward. Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step.</p>
Dino Torino	Florida	I love fly fishing for the Atlantic Bonito Please help this species out so my Grandson can enjoy them as well as many other people
Adam Cuthriell	Alaska	Please protect our fisheries!

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Toby Butler	Mississippi	<p>North Carolina accounts for 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest. That is a huge share of a shared migratory resource, and our landings have been trending upward since 2017, now exceeding the long-term average.</p> <p>There are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. No size limit, no bag limit, no stock assessment. We are flying blind while recreational effort is rising fast.</p> <p>Atlantic bonito school in dense, short-lived pulses off our coast. This behavior, combined with new technology and changing angler tactics, makes the fishery extremely vulnerable to rapid overharvest if we do nothing.</p> <p>These fish are best eaten fresh. They do not freeze well. Without a limit, we risk significant waste of a high-quality resource that should be conserved for the table, not the trash. Over the past few years, there have been constant images of fishermen retaining over a hundred bonito per trip. This is not impressive. It is disgusting, and no one who does this is a sportsman.</p> <p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule (something anglers are rarely exceeding anyway) while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach required first.</p> <p>Massachusetts already took this exact step in 2025 with a 16-inch minimum size and five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is moving on similar measures. North Carolina should match our neighbors on this shared resource instead of becoming the weak link.</p> <p>This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>The average landings in NC per year since 1994 are approximately 16,500 fish and 77,500 lbs. In 2025, 96,00 fish were landed and 303,000lbs.</p>

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<p>Matthew St. Onge</p>	<p>Massachusetts</p>	<p>Please enact common sense regulations to preserve the Bonito population while giving anglers a chance to keep one or two per day. Do it for our children and grandchildren. Thank you.</p>
<p>Jay Harrison</p>	<p>Connecticut</p>	<p>Please do consider taking preventative measures for Atlantic Bonito as other states have.</p> <p>They are an AMAZING eating fish and very fun to catch on light tackle, and can be targeted from shore and boat for these reasons they are very popular and have continued to grow in popularity.</p> <p>Everyone should be able to fish for and harvest these fish, but UNLIMITED retention is a recipe for people killing as many fish as they can and ultimately letting a majority going to waste. I've seen it a thousand times people think they will use or save the fish and they simply do not.</p> <p>Please consider putting in basic protections so that it is not a completely unregulated fishery... these fish are amazing in every facet for inshore fisherman and we want long term abundance and harvestability!</p>
<p>Andrew Jordan</p>	<p>Rhode Island</p>	<p>Atlantic Bonito are a staple of the inshore fishery and we wish to have limits put in place to ensure that there is long term abundance and harvestability!</p> <p>The ability to harvest is important and especially so with Atlantic Bonito because they are so delicious.</p> <p>My wish is for there to be basic parameters and biomass monitoring so that there can be long term abundance.</p> <p>Open season with no regulations is a recipe for disaster for popular fish which we have seen time and time again... Striped Bass... Bluefin Tuna.... for once it would be great to avoid a complete crash of the stock before any action is taken. Small actions now can lead to significant abundance and lack of additional action into the future!</p>

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Curt Nadeau	Connecticut	Please protect bonitos! Adopt studies and regulations to limit catches for the benefit of the entire US fishery. Everyone has to do their share.
Charles Bowman	Pennsylvania	I support a management of the Atlantic Bonito in North Carolina. I agree that North Carolina should follow what Massachusetts has allotted for the Atlantic Bonito to ensure the preservation of species.
Deven Davidson	North Carolina	<p>There is nothing to gain from not implementing a bare minimum regulation for Atlantic bonito and there is plenty to loose.</p> <p>As a recreational angler I travel to the Outer Banks at least twice a year to take guided fishing trips for these fish. I only keep 1 or 2 and spend the rest of my time catching and releasing many more.</p> <p>North Carolina has a great fishery and we have the chance to make it even better with the proposed rule.</p>
Andrew Dober	New York	Unregulated fish harvesting needs to stop. Commercial interests will harvest without concern resulting in long term damage. This is not rocket science but rather a common sense requirement.
Rory Anderson	Massachusetts	<p>Massachusetts already took this exact step in 2025 with a 16-inch minimum size and five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is moving on similar measures. North Carolina should match our neighbors on this shared resource instead of becoming the weak link.</p> <p>This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p>
Robin Grossman	Rhode Island	I strongly support North Carolina's proposed, sensible guidelines for bonito harvest. While delicious fresh caught, bonito neither keeps, nor freezes well, so a reasonable harvest limit will provide protection from over fishing, with little impact on fisherman, would certainly be disinclined to eat more than five fish before they begin to deteriorate. In light of declining striper and bluefish populations, let's do all we can to protect the most exciting light tackle species available to us in northern Atlantic.
David Surdel	Massachusetts	<p>Dear Fisheries Managers,</p> <p>I strongly support the proposed rule for Atlantic bonito (15A NCAC 03M .0524) This is exactly the kind of proactive management we need more of.</p>

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		<p>North Carolina accounts for 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest. That is a huge share of a shared migratory resource, and our landings have been trending upward since 2017, now exceeding the long-term average.</p> <p>There are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. No size limit, no bag limit, no stock assessment. We are flying blind while recreational effort is rising fast.</p> <p>Atlantic bonito school in dense, short-lived pulses off our coast. This behavior, combined with new technology and changing angler tactics, makes the fishery extremely vulnerable to rapid overharvest if we do nothing.</p> <p>These fish are best eaten fresh. They do not freeze well. Without a limit, we risk significant waste of a high-quality resource that should be conserved for the table, not the trash. Over the past few years, there have been constant images of fishermen retaining over a hundred bonito per trip. This is not impressive. It is disgusting, and no one who does this is a sportsman.</p> <p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule (something anglers are rarely exceeding anyway) while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach required first.</p> <p>Massachusetts already took this exact step in 2025 with a 16-inch minimum size and five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is moving on similar measures. North Carolina should match our neighbors on this shared resource instead of becoming the weak link.</p> <p>This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>The average landings in NC per year since 1994 are approximately 16,500 fish and 77,500 lbs. In 2025, 96,00 fish were landed and 303,000lbs.</p>

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		<p>I strongly support the Commission approving Notice of Text today so this rule can move forward. Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step.</p> <p>Thank you, Dave Surdel</p>
Jack Higgins	Maryland	I support the recommendations of the Saga. Bag limits are a must.
David Prockop	Rhode Island	<p>Please, please, please move ahead with protections for atlantic bonito! We recreational anglers love fishing for them, which makes bonito economically important to fishing guides, tackle shops, and other related businesses. They would all suffer if the bonito population went down so please take proactive measures instead of waiting for a big population decline.</p> <p>Anyone who wants to keep bonito for food or bait can satisfy that desire with just a few fish. Imposing a small bag limit seems like the best way to keep the population healthy.</p> <p>Thanks for your consideration,</p> <p>Dave Prockop</p>
Anthony Thompson	Massachusetts	Do the right thing and protect these fish. Your efforts affect the entire east coast. Allow others to experience these fish. We've already lost striper bsss and are close to loosing False Albacore. Please don't add to this list. Doing nothing is not only selfish but snubbing your nose at your fellow Americans in the northeast.
Gregg Hartley	Maryland	<p>Dear Commissioners;</p> <p>I strongly support the Commission taking action to better manage the bonito stock. Managing fisheries is not an easy job and your efforts are appreciated. Setting limits is a reasonable action. This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>I reside in Maryland on the Chesapeake Bay and as an active recreational angler am aware of the challenges in regulating popular fish stocks.Thanks for makimng the correct and hard decisions.</p>

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Capt Dan Marini	Massachusetts	Hello. I would like to you what an important part of the northeast fishery bonito have become ...with stripers in trouble this a great light tackle option for everyone...and they don't freeze at all so one or two fish is perfect for most. Please protect these fish before they go the way of others. Thank you very much. Dan Marini
Derek Edwards	North Carolina	Please utilize "size and keep limits" to restrict Atlantic Bonito harvest and build safeguards for future stocks of this wonderful fishery. Thank you for a progressive and forward thinking management plan for Atlantic Bonito.
Atticus Fallon	New York	Please help manage a vey important inshore species before it's too late and we repeat historical disasters or other prized species. Let's use science and forward looking actions to build a better marine environment for the future.
Jonathan Agosta	New York	<p>Dear NC DEQ,</p> <p>I am writing in support of the proposed regulation to add a size limit and five fish bag limit for Atlantic Bonito. I am an enthusiastic angler of Atlantic Bonito, primarily in the Northeast (NY/NJ).</p> <p>I believe that this proactive management is necessary to ensure that this increasingly popular fishery isn't degraded and remains a resource for the entire east coast for years to come. A five-fish limit is perfectly reasonable: bonito do not freeze well, so the meat from five keeper-sized fish per angler provides ample fresh meat for an individual or even a family. What's more, is that by setting an example for the rest of the coast, North Carolina has the opportunity to influence other states to take similar measures, thus further protecting this resource. Conversely, if North Carolina rejects this proposal, it will signal to other states that they also shouldn't take any management action until the stock is depleted and the resource is less reliable.</p> <p>I appreciate your consideration of this management action, and encourage you to adopt the proposed size and bag limit.</p> <p>Sincerely, Jonathan Agosta</p>

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Roman Dudus	Connecticut	<p>These fish are fun to catch and release. If we don't keep an eye and protect the population than the population will meet the fate as Winter Flounder, River Herring and soon the Striped Bass. Start putting limits on these fish!!</p>
Caiden Jenkins	North Carolina	<p>It's seems over the past few years Atlantic Bonito have inhabited our NC waters more so than in the past and they should be protected in ways as other gamefish. Small bag limits should be in place for an incredible species that doesn't do good in the freezer but is delicious the day of or a few prior so we avoid over harvesting for nothing more than a kill and waste if looked deeper upon. Laws should be enforced more so than they are now because I and others can testify the overtaking of these fish happens regularly. They are a great eating fish but a prime example of take what you will eat fresh there is no need for a picture of your pile of dead fish on the dock it's only to make the people who are not out there every day seeing what's going on or do not care whatsoever or simply for a guide to cash a paycheck because their client caught and killed so many fish. It's pathetic to witness and needs to be monitored and limited just like every other species is. On top of this there needs to be a stricter law on our redfish, we have many more residential redfish than most think especially in the colder months year after year the same fish come back to places unless rerouted by human contact. People go out everyday killing their limit or more and seeing it first hand with how poorly everything else is managed is a bit disappointing as someone who has seen our fishery rise and fall for around 10 years now and practice conservation the best I possibly can. We need to do better as a whole we all are a problem but have to do our part, whether that may be more funding or just whoever is in charge and enforcing the laws paying a bit more attention to the real issues around them. Protect our poor fish please so we can all enjoy them responsibly and respectfully for time and generations to come! Thank you, Caiden.</p>
Rich Hanratty	Connecticut	<p>North Carolina accounts for 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest. That is a huge share of a shared migratory resource, and our landings have been trending upward since 2017, now exceeding the long-term average.</p> <p>There are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. No size limit, no bag limit, no stock assessment. We are flying blind while recreational effort is rising fast.</p> <p>Atlantic bonito school in dense, short-lived pulses off our coast. This behavior, combined with</p>

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Parker Adams	Virginia	I strongly support this proposed rule for Atlantic Bonito (15A NCAC 03M .0524). It's smart conservation and timing is of the essence.
Margie Phillips	North Carolina	I grew up in Maryland, where it is illegal to harvest female crabs. With respect to the blue crab harvesting regulations, to me this is a no-brainer. It is easy to identify male vs. female crabs. I believe that harvesting female crabs should be against regulations in NC.

Name	State/Province	Please type your comments in the box below.
Dan Ruede	New York	<p>Dear North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission,</p> <p>I would like to support the proposed rule for Atlantic bonito (15A NCAC 03M .0524). With Atlantic bonito migrating off the coast on North Carolina, with North Carolina accounting 22 percent of all coastwide recreational bonito harvest. As we learn more about this species, it's a smart proactive approach to the future of this species.</p> <p>Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step.</p>
Carl Heise	Rhode Island	<p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule (something anglers are rarely exceeding anyway) while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach required first.</p> <p>Massachusetts already took this exact step in 2025 with a 16-inch minimum size and five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is moving on similar measures. North Carolina should match our neighbors on this shared resource instead of becoming the weak link.</p> <p>This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>The average landings in NC per year since 1994 are approximately 16,500 fish and 77,500 lbs. In 2025, 96,00 fish were landed and 303,000lbs.</p> <p>We strongly support the Commission approving Notice of Text today so this rule can move</p>

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		forward. Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step.
Robert Schneider	North Carolina	Agree w/ proposed 5 fish limit for Atlantic Bonito. There should be no need for a size limit. Occasionally we catch a few small ones in the fall off Wilmington. They are good for fresh sushi.
James Callahan	New York	Please be advised that I support putting conservation minded regulations in place for Atlantic Bonito.
Scott Silver	Massachusetts	As someone who values the fishing for bonito both in my home state and when on vacation in North Carolina, I urge the commission to begin safeguarding the bonito fishery with common sense regulations that ensure the continued health of this fishery for both residents of NC, and tourists like myself. Thank you
Patrick Huban	Connecticut	<p>I am a Fly Fishing charter captain in Connecticut. Although this is a long way from North Carolina, we all know that each state on the East Coast shares this Pelagic species. The last few falls the Long Island Sound has seen a great run of Bonito which has filled the void of sub par Striped Bass and False Albacore fishing. Pro active management is just common sense. North Carolina can again set a positive precedent in fisheries management. These fish are economically valuable and having zero management in place is playing chicken with the livelihood of many small businesses up and down the East coast. Thank you for your time.</p> <p>Captain Patrick Huban Albatross Fly Fishing</p>
David Blinken	New York	<p>We need greater restrictions on Bonito harvest. We need to plan for abundance and maintain a healthy fishery for all to enjoy not just a limited few. Additionally it's also very important for people in the charter boat and for hire industry to have abundance because having more species of fish to fish for is very important for our businesses. More fish in the water equals more money. I fully support what The American Saltwater Guides Association say's. Thank you.</p>
Woodrow Albin	Rhode Island	North Carolina accounts for 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest. That is a huge share of a shared migratory resource, and our landings have been trending upward since 2017, now exceeding the long-term average.

Name	State/Province	Please type your comments in the box below.
		<p>There are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. No size limit, no bag limit, no stock assessment. We are flying blind while recreational effort is rising fast.</p> <p>Atlantic bonito school in dense, short-lived pulses off our coast. This behavior, combined with new technology and changing angler tactics, makes the fishery extremely vulnerable to rapid overharvest if we do nothing.</p> <p>These fish are best eaten fresh. They do not freeze well. Without a limit, we risk significant waste of a high-quality resource that should be conserved for the table, not the trash. Over the past few years, there have been constant images of fishermen retaining over a hundred bonito per trip. This is not impressive. It is disgusting, and no one who does this is a sportsman.</p> <p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule (something anglers are rarely exceeding anyway) while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach required first.</p> <p>Massachusetts already took this exact step in 2025 with a 16-inch minimum size and five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is moving on similar measures. North Carolina should match our neighbors on this shared resource instead of becoming the weak link. This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>We strongly support the Commission approving Notice of Text today so this rule can move forward. Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step.</p>
Geoffrey McNally	Rhode Island	<p>Hello,</p> <p>Please implement the proposed 5 fish per person per day bag limit for bonito (15A NCAC 03M .0524).</p> <p>Geoffrey McNally Tiverton, RI</p>
Robert Verity	New York	<p>The best way to keep fishing stocks healthy is to take action before the fishing stock needs to to be.</p>

Name	State/Province	Please type your comments in the box below.
Brian Sittlow	Rhode Island	<p>I support proactive regulations for recreationally caught Atlantic Bonito.</p> <p>This will help ensure conservation minded policies are in place to ensure a healthy and economically viable fishery for the entire Atlantic coast.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted,            Brian Sittlow            Westerly, RI            Avid recreational angler for Atlantic Bonito and False Albacore</p>
Jerry carson		<p>Fishing and crabbing have declined in Albemarle Sound over past few years west of 32 bridge.</p>
Matthew OConnell	Rhode Island	<p>North Carolina accounts for 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest. That is a huge share of a shared migratory resource, and our landings have been trending upward since 2017, now exceeding the long-term average.</p> <p>There are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. No size limit, no bag limit, no stock assessment. We are flying blind while recreational effort is rising fast.</p> <p>Atlantic bonito school in dense, short-lived pulses off our coast. This behavior, combined with new technology and changing angler tactics, makes the fishery extremely vulnerable to rapid overharvest if we do nothing.</p> <p>These fish are best eaten fresh. They do not freeze well. Without a limit, we risk significant waste of a high-quality resource that should be conserved for the table, not the trash. Over the past few years, there have been constant images of fishermen retaining over a hundred bonito per trip. This is not impressive. It is disgusting, and no one who does this is a sportsman.</p> <p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule (something anglers are rarely exceeding anyway) while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach required first.</p> <p>Massachusetts already took this exact step in 2025 with a 16-inch minimum size and five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is moving on similar measures. North Carolina should match our neighbors on this shared resource instead of becoming the weak link. This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the</p>

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		<p>resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>We strongly support the Commission approving Notice of Text today so this rule can move forward. Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step.</p> <p>The average landings in NC per year since 1994 are approximately 16,500 fish and 77,500 lbs. In 2025, 96,000 fish were landed and 303,000lbs.</p>
Chris Cavallacci	Florida	<p>I am a resident of the Florida Keys and a part-time fishing guide. Atlantic bonito are migratory fish that travel the coast, so what happens in North Carolina waters directly affects the fisheries here in Florida and throughout the Atlantic.</p> <p>I strongly support the proposed 5-fish recreational bag limit and the proclamation authority for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. With no current limits in place, there is nothing to prevent overharvest of these fish, which school tightly and spoil quickly. We need these basic protections now, before the population declines further.</p> <p>We have seen what happens when fisheries lack strong protections and enforcement. The unregulated Chinese distant-water fishing fleets are the largest in the world and notorious for illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. Their massive fleet of subsidized supertrawlers operates with little regard for sustainability, especially in countries too weak to push back. The result is total population collapse that destroys local economies and food security.</p> <p>In West Africa, particularly in Senegal and Ghana, Chinese industrial trawlers dominate the waters. More than half of the small pelagic fish populations have collapsed. Local fishermen return with empty nets, coastal communities face food shortages, and economies suffer devastating losses.</p> <p>The same pattern occurred in Newfoundland, Canada. Decades of overfishing and weak management drove the once-abundant cod stocks down to less than one percent of historic levels. In 1992, the government imposed a moratorium that eliminated over 30,000 jobs in the fishing industry. Entire towns were emptied as families lost their livelihoods, and many of those stocks have still not recovered decades later.</p> <p>We are witnessing a similar disaster right here on the Atlantic coast in the Chesapeake Bay. A Canadian-owned company operates a large-scale industrial purse seine reduction fishery that removes hundreds of millions of pounds of menhaden each year. These forage fish are critical to the food chain. The lack of meaningful limits has caused localized depletion that harms the entire ecosystem, including sportfish populations like striped bass.</p>

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		<p>North Carolina must not follow these paths. Adopting the 5-fish bag limit and giving fisheries managers the authority they need is essential to protecting bonito and the communities that depend on them. These fish and the jobs they support belong to all of us along the coast. We must act responsibly now before it is too late.</p> <p>Thank you, Chris Cavallacci</p>
James Turek	Rhode Island	<p>To the Commission: I am dismayed that there are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in NC, and no NC stock assessment has been completed. NC accounts for 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest, a substantial share of this migratory species. Overharvest in NC is well known. There are frequent images and descriptions of fishermen retaining over a hundred bonito per trip, an abysmal, unsportsmanlike action.</p> <p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit permanently, while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach, required first.</p> <p>Massachusetts took this step in 2025, adopting a 16-inch minimum size and a five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is pursuing similar measures. North Carolina should align with neighboring states on this shared resource rather than becoming the weak link.</p> <p>I emphasize that this action is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a fishery challenge before we lose another inshore species, the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>I strongly support the Commission approving the Notice of Text today, so this rule can move forward. Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step forward.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my comments.</p>
Edwin Oxley	North Carolina	<p>I would like to support the rulemaking for Atlantic Bonito. I have been a long time fisherman in the state of NC from mountains to ocean and have fished annually for Bonito for the last 20 years. We need a management plan in place, I have seen firsthand the decline in Bonito</p>

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		<p>populations over the past 10 years. Sincerely, Edwin J. Oxley</p>
Thomas G Williams	Pennsylvania	<p>having a long history of sport fishing the NC and SC coast, I want to commend the NC Marine Fisheries Commission for taking the step to proactively plan for Bonito resource management.</p>
chad plumly	Georgia	<p>North Carolina accounts for 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest. That is a huge share of a shared migratory resource, and our landings have been trending upward since 2017, now exceeding the long-term average.</p> <p>There are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. No size limit, no bag limit, no stock assessment. We are flying blind while recreational effort is rising fast.</p> <p>These fish are best eaten fresh. They do not freeze well. Without a limit, we risk significant waste of a high-quality resource that should be conserved for the table, not the trash. Over the past few years, there have been constant images of fishermen retaining over a hundred bonito per trip. This is not impressive. It is disgusting, and no one who does this is a sportsman.</p> <p>This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>We strongly support the Commission approving Notice of Text today so this rule can move forward. Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step.</p>
Eddie Nickens	North Carolina	<p>I have seen firsthand the astonishing increase in angler effort directed towards Atlantic bonito in the Atlantic Beach/Morehead City area. North Carolina showed great leadership and forethought by passing commonsense guardrail management protocols for false albacore. Doing the same for Atlantic bonito is prudent and justified. The clear waste of these fishery resources is appalling. Please move forward with the 5-fish limit for bonito and continue North Carolina's much-appreciated embrace of conserving public trust resources.</p>

Name	State/Province	Please type your comments in the box below.
Jon Pershke	North Carolina	We need reasonable limits on ALL fish!
The fisher of men	North Carolina	<p>Dear commission, last month I was privileged to see a tremendous use of tax payers money I figured I'd share it!</p> <p>So I was hungry looking for a late lunch so what better place than to get a shrimp burger than Els East when you're out in the middle of no where. So that's what I did and low and behold there's a marine fishery employee who happened to look a lot like the director or someone whom looked just like her in DMF clothes and in the drove the state truck on stay paid time most definitely in the middle of the week at 14:30! And what was she doing sitting at the picnic table with her girlfriends shooting the breeze and acting like our tax payer money should be paying her to sit there for all that time. And I just was thinking maybe whom ever that woman was should be paid less and that money saved should go towards the "dwindling" flounder population or if not, maybe the "dwindling" speckled trout population. Honestly the money spent so unwisely could really be used in far better ways especially in education! So just something to consider I just don't like paying taxes for folks to sit around and spend it on shrimp burgers and flirting in Smyrna. There's a better use of time and money and I encourage yall to find it because next time I'm letting the commercial fishermen have something put on Facebook and anywhere else they can post the childish folks running the DMF around here! Yall have a good one!</p>
George Loomis		<p>I am disappointed that there are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in NC, and no NC stock assessment has been completed despite NC accounting for 22% of all coastwide recreational Atlantic bonito harvest, which is a substantial share of this migratory species. Overharvest in NC is well known. There are frequent internet images and descriptions of fishermen retaining over a hundred bonito per trip. This type of harvest is not sustainable.</p> <p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit permanently, while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach, required first.</p> <p>Massachusetts took this step in 2025, adopting a 16-inch minimum size and a five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is pursuing similar measures. North Carolina should align with neighboring states on this shared resource rather than becoming an obvious outlier.</p>

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		<p>I emphasize that this action is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a fishery challenge before we lose another inshore species, the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>I strongly support the Commission approving the Notice of Text today, so this rule can move forward. Thanks to the DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step forward.</p> <p>And thank you for your consideration of my comments.</p>
Robert Scanlon	Massachusetts	<p>Please protect our shared resources respectfully. Develop good management data. Always be conservative in judgement and regulation. Atlantic Bonito belongs to all of us and especially to generations to come.</p>
Tony Friedrich (ASGA)	Maryland	<p>ASGA would like to thank the team at NC Division of Marine Fisheries and the NCMFC for taking this proactive step. The North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission is taking a clear, common-sense step forward at its May 2026 meeting. The proposed rule for Atlantic bonito (15A NCAC 03M .0524) is exactly the kind of management we need more of on the Atlantic coast. North Carolina currently has no rules in place for Atlantic bonito. No size limit. No bag limit. No stock assessment. Meanwhile, recreational landings have been climbing steadily since 2017 and now exceed the long-term average. North Carolina alone accounts for 22 percent of all coastwide recreational bonito harvest. That is a massive share of a shared migratory resource, and the trend is unmistakable.</p> <p>Atlantic bonito behave differently here than in many other parts of their range. They form dense, short-lived schools, often around structure, and appear in pulses that make them highly vulnerable to concentrated harvest. New technology and shifting angler behavior have made them easier to target than ever. Without guardrails, we risk repeating the same story we have seen with too many other inshore species — rapid expansion followed by sudden decline.</p> <p>The proposed rule addresses this head-on. It establishes a straightforward five-fish recreational bag limit per person per day as a permanent baseline. Current harvest data shows most anglers are not keeping anywhere near that many fish anyway, so the immediate impact on the fishery will be minimal. At the same time, the rule gives the Fisheries Director authority to implement additional measures by proclamation if conditions warrant — but only with MFC consent, public</p>

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		<p>outreach, and a clear effective date. This creates a fast, flexible response mechanism without locking the state into rigid rules that cannot adapt.</p> <p>This is not about punishing anglers. It is about preventing waste. Atlantic bonito are best eaten fresh. They do not freeze well. Unchecked harvest on a pulse fishery like this almost guarantees fish left on ice or in freezers that never get eaten. That is not responsible angling, and it is not good for the resource.</p> <p>Massachusetts already took this exact precautionary approach in 2025 with a 16-inch minimum size and a five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is moving in the same direction. By adopting this rule, North Carolina matches our neighbors on a shared migratory stock instead of becoming the weak link on the coast.</p> <p>The American Saltwater Guides Association strongly supports the Commission approving Notice of Text for this rule today. It is a measured, science-based first step that protects a valuable fishery before problems become crises. We cannot afford to lose another inshore species to delay and inaction.</p>
George Klahre	North Carolina	Enact a 16-inch minimum size and a five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore immediately for NC sport fishing.
Kyle Schaefer	Maine	<p>I am in support of the proposed measures to limit Bonito harvest to 5 fish.</p> <p>There are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. No size limit, no bag limit, no stock assessment. We are flying blind while recreational effort is rising fast.</p> <p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule (something anglers are rarely exceeding anyway) while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach required first.</p> <p>This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p>

Name	State/Province	Please type your comments in the box below.
		<p>Best, Capt. Kyle Schaefer</p>
Joe Romano	North Carolina	<p>Commissioners,</p> <p>The NC Collaboratory report by Dr. Joel Fodrie raises an important and uncomfortable reality: North Carolina is one of the most heavily regulated coastal fisheries states in the country, yet many fish populations still remain below historical abundance levels.</p> <p>That fact alone should force all of us: scientists, regulators, legislators, fishermen, and the public—to step back and ask some deeper questions.</p> <p>For decades, North Carolina has continually added new layers of fisheries rules, restrictions, closures, gear limitations, quota reductions, and access controls. Yet we rarely pause to conduct a full historical audit of what regulations were implemented, what outcomes were expected, and whether those outcomes were ever truly achieved.</p> <p>We do stock assessments on fish species. Maybe it is time we also conduct an assessment of the regulatory system itself. Over the last 40 years, regulations have steadily expanded while public trust has steadily declined. If abundance has not returned in many fisheries despite increasingly restrictive management, then we have to honestly ask: Are we missing the forest for the trees?</p> <p>What if many of the abundance fluctuations we are seeing are driven more by ecosystem dynamics, climate variability, habitat degradation, water quality, predation shifts, and large-scale environmental cycles than by harvest regulations alone?</p> <p>If that is even partially true, then continuing to endlessly tighten restrictions on public seafood access becomes a dangerous path—economically, culturally, and politically. At some point, regulations that continually grow without clearly measurable success begin to lose legitimacy in the eyes of the public. People begin to distrust the science, the process, and the institutions behind it. History shows us that rules divorced from common sense and lived reality eventually create backlash, resentment, and noncompliance.</p>

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		<p>The Age of Prohibition taught America an important lesson: when regulations become overly aggressive and disconnected from public sensibilities, people stop believing in the system itself. Fishing is not just commerce or recreation in North Carolina. Keeping fish to feed your family is part of our heritage, our culture, and our public trust rights. The ability to responsibly harvest seafood for personal consumption is deeply tied to the identity of coastal communities and everyday citizens alike.</p> <p>Most people can accept having a bad day fishing. Most people understand that abundance naturally rises and falls over time. But when people are repeatedly told they cannot keep what they catch, frustration and distrust begin to grow rapidly.</p> <p>That is why we need a return to common-sense fisheries management focused on maintaining reasonable public access while still providing practical conservation safeguards.</p> <p>Simple tools like size limits and slot limits have repeatedly demonstrated that they can work. They protect juvenile fish, preserve breeding populations, and still allow public participation and seafood access. If a stock appears stressed, implement sensible slot limits and monitor outcomes. If abundance rebounds, consider tools such as limited trophy tags whose proceeds help fund independent scientific research and habitat restoration.</p> <p>We need management systems that people can understand, support, and trust—not systems so complex and punitive that they alienate the very public they are supposed to serve.</p> <p>This conversation is clearly now reaching the legislative level as well. Senate Bill 977 reflects growing concern among lawmakers and citizens regarding the cumulative impact of fisheries regulations enacted over the past decade. Whether one agrees with every provision in that bill or not, its introduction signals a broader frustration that cannot simply be dismissed.</p> <p>I believe North Carolina has an opportunity right now to reset the tone and direction of this debate. We should move away from constant escalation and toward collaboration.</p>

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		<p>We should study not only fish populations, but also the historical effectiveness of regulations themselves. We should prioritize habitat, water quality, ecosystem resilience, and public trust alongside harvest controls. And we should remember that conservation succeeds best when the public feels included not punished.</p> <p>North Carolina's fisheries belong to all of us. The goal should not simply be more rules. The goal should be abundant fisheries, public trust, seafood access, and sustainable coastal communities that endure for generations.</p> <p>My final request to this Commission is simple:</p> <p>Please pause the creation of any major new fisheries regulations for one year and use that time for honest reflection and institutional self-assessment. Task the Division of Marine Fisheries with conducting a comprehensive review of the past 30 years of fisheries regulations in North Carolina:</p> <p>What worked?  What did not work?  Which regulations produced measurable biological improvements, and which ones simply added complexity and restriction without clear success?</p> <p>We should also openly identify the biggest scientific unknowns that still exist.  How do long-term climate cycles influence abundance and recruitment?  How much are habitat loss and water quality issues driving fisheries declines?  How can we better study juvenile recruitment, predator-prey dynamics, forage systems, and overall ecosystem function instead of viewing each species in isolation? If we are serious about rebuilding fisheries, then habitat, ecosystem understanding, and environmental resilience must become just as important as harvest restrictions.</p> <p>I also ask this Commission to help form stakeholder working groups built around cooperation instead of conflict groups focused on reforming fisheries management in ways that maintain conservation while also protecting commercial seafood access, public trust harvest, and recreational opportunity.</p>

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		<p>North Carolina needs a management system that the public can once again believe in. This Commission still has an opportunity to reform the process before the public loses faith entirely.</p> <p>The path forward cannot simply be endless escalation of restrictions. It must become a process grounded in humility, transparency, common sense, collaboration, and measurable results.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration.</p> <p>Joe Romano</p>
Captain Ken Cooper	Rhode Island	<p>I am a Coast Guard licensed captain with over 70 years experience fishing in salt water. I have fished for Atlantic Bonito and False Albacore many times from Moorehead City, NC. This is a great fishery that needs to be proactively protected. I fully support the proposed regulation. It would put N C in the forefront of smart conservation of our valuable coastal resources.</p>
Joseph R Mayward	New York	<p>I fish up and down the Atlantic coast for Albies and Bonito. I support a five fish per angler limit as a permanent rule to preserve the resource. Thank you for acting to improve future fish populations.</p>
Gary Morrissette	New Hampshire	<p>I support a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule.</p>
John C.	Maine	<p>I support the state of North Carolina moving to impose a daily bag limit on Atlantic Bonito. It is incredibly irresponsible and short-sighted to allow unrestricted and unregulated fishing of a recreationally valuable species with no baseline stock assessment to understand population status, with little known about the age structure of the population, and with little known regarding the extent of their movement ecology. Massachusetts has already imposed this regulation in 2025 - it would be of great benefit to current and future generations of anglers, guides, and the overall mid-Atlantic ecosystem for a state which is responsible for over 20% of all Atlantic Bonito landings to join in and manage the species as its popularity as a recreational resource continues to grow. I support this measure as a method of imposing guard rails without undermining the rights of fishers who pursue this resource while the necessary research is conducted to ensure a sustainable management plan is in place for Atlantic Bonito.</p>

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George Albrecht	Massachusetts	Please pass the proposed rule for Atlantic bonito (15A NCAC 03M .0524). There is no reason not to have these protections in place.
Pam Walter	North Carolina	5 fish limit is too high. It should only be 3.
Jot Owens	North Carolina	<p>The Atlantic Bonito fishery is very important to the recreational, charter/guide and commercial anglers. The Bontio fishery seems to be thieving, but in the last ten years the pressure on the Bonito has increased greatly. I would like to see limits put in place now, so the fishery can stay sustainable for many years to come.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and your service to our great state.</p>
Chris McCaffity	North Carolina	Please Make Fishing Fun Again by focusing more on enhancement than enforcement. Please consider options for using regional hatcheries to incubate fertilized eggs from a wide variety of local specimens and release hatchlings to live wild and free as Natural Selection ensures survival of the fittest. This ethical and economical approach to stocking native seafood could sustainably support historically high abundance and harvest levels. Please support a statewide moratorium on any new water-column leases of Public Waters. Thank you!
William Todd	Massachusetts	Please protect harvest of Atlantic Bonito. We enjoy seeing them around Cape Cod and the islands but we need to limit the taking of Bonito. Bill Todd. Brewster Ma
William Todd	Massachusetts	Please protect harvest of Atlantic Bonito. We enjoy seeing them around Cape Cod and the islands but we need to limit the taking of Bonito. Bill Todd. Brewster Ma
Randolph Smith	Georgia	As our environment declines and our population grows, we need to establish science based limits on all our fisheries. Please start with Atlantic bonito NOW
Blane Chocklett	Virginia	We need to protect and manage Atlantic Bonito, I'm in favor of Bonito management.
Michael Lynch	Rhode Island	<p>As an angler who loves catching these fish, I support any/all proactive management for Atlantic Bonito. I'm aligned with all bullet points below and in favor of responsible regulations being put in place to preserve this resource.</p> <p>-There are currently no management measures in place for Atlantic bonito in North Carolina. No size limit, no bag limit, no stock assessment. We are flying blind while recreational effort is rising fast.</p> <p>-Atlantic bonito school in dense, short-lived pulses off our coast. This behavior, combined with</p>

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		<p>new technology and changing angler tactics, makes the fishery extremely vulnerable to rapid overharvest if we do nothing.</p> <p>-These fish are best eaten fresh. They do not freeze well. Without a limit, we risk significant waste of a high-quality resource that should be conserved for the table, not the trash. Over the past few years, there have been constant images of fishermen retaining over a hundred bonito per trip. This is not impressive. It is disgusting, and no one who does this is a sportsman.</p> <p>The proposed rule is precautionary and smart. It puts a reasonable five-fish recreational bag limit in permanent rule (something anglers are rarely exceeding anyway) while giving the Fisheries Director proclamation authority to act quickly if conditions change — with MFC consent and public outreach required first.</p> <p>-Massachusetts already took this exact step in 2025 with a 16-inch minimum size and five-fish combined limit for bonito and false albacore. Rhode Island is moving on similar measures. North Carolina should match our neighbors on this shared resource instead of becoming the weak link.</p> <p>-This is not about shutting down a fishery. It is about getting ahead of a problem before we lose another inshore species the way we have lost so many others. Proactive management protects the resource, the anglers who love it, and the coastal economy it supports.</p> <p>-The average landings in NC per year since 1994 are approximately 16,500 fish and 77,500 lbs. In 2025, 96,00 fish were landed and 303,000lbs.</p> <p>We strongly support the Commission approving Notice of Text today so this rule can move forward. Thank you to DMF staff for the thorough issue paper and to the Commission for taking this step.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and efforts!!</p>
Bailey Short		<p>Atlantic Bonito limits are a great common sense step forward for fisheries management in the state. Being proactive in this case does a great deal to protect the fishery</p>

Name	State/Province	Please type your comments in the box below.
Stuart Creighton	North Carolina	<p>Good afternoon Commissioners,</p> <p>While there is only one fisheries issue scheduled for a vote, your agenda is full of important topics that will certainly be significant as we move forward. I would like to add a few comments about several of them and add a few more that need immediate attention.</p> <p>First, you are scheduled to vote on Notice of Text to advance the proposed new regulations on Atlantic Bonito. I fully support placing the recommended guidelines into rule. A 5 fish/person/day limit is both reasonable and practical. Doing so will go a long way in keeping this increasingly important fishery one that is world-class. I applaud this commission for having the forethought to be proactive on this issue.</p> <p>The change to the red snapper season through the EFP program is a welcome sight. For years, CCA along with other conservation organizations, has argued that the red snapper population was largely recovered and that access was being denied through poor regulations (and iffy science). We certainly hope the extended season will allow for not only greater access to this important fishery, but will also extend conservation of red snapper while minimizing wastage.</p> <p>Secondly, with respect to the blue crab stock assessment update, it is ultimately a case of "pay me now, or pay me later". The rapidly decreasing numbers of both spawning stock biomass of female crabs and the closely related poor recruitment into the stock are very alarming. The Division's recommendation to reduce harvest by 20% now is appropriate, for it will help to minimize the declines that are being observed. Failing to act will only result in deeper cuts, as we have seen very recently with southern flounder. If these trends verify when the benchmark stock assessment is published, and they likely will, crabbers will be faced with a 40-50% harvest reduction. As contentious as the proposed 20% reduction is now, can you imagine the reaction when harvest has to be cut by as much as 50% in another two years???</p> <p>Let's hope the ITP update shows minimal turtle interactions as a function of reduced net use, especially for large mesh gill nets in the flounder fishery.</p> <p>Next, I am very interested in Dr. Fodrie's presentation on the Collaborative Study results. The Legislature seems to think that it will be used to advise them on future marine fisheries issues. They made that clear with the introduction of two monumentally bad pieces of legislation: S977 and S1061, hoping for a moratorium on regulations that could last as much as a decade while they review the findings of the study. Those study results show several important things: NC is heavily regulated, but those regulations are ineffective (probably because managers refuse to deal with the real problem of too much gear in our waters). The study shows that every fishery, except shrimping, has been subject to rapidly increasing regulations as stocks become more and more</p>

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		<p>depleted (could that be because of decades of status quo on shrimp trawling?). It shows our nursery areas are not functioning properly (likely from a perfect storm of overexploitation, habitat damage, and water quality degradation). There is even a suggestion of ecosystem-wide management; a great idea IF it is done properly.</p> <p>Finally, I would ask that the MFC consider the following issues that are not currently on the agenda. We do have an invasive species problem with blue catfish in the Albemarle Sound region. Do we have any kind of grip on what that is doing to that regional ecosystem? How will we address that moving forward? I fully believe that we have missed the boat with the recent changes to striped bass management enacted last August. It makes little sense to say that we are actively trying to save the ASMA population, yet allow gill nets in regions that those fish are known to visit. If these fish are as transient in our coastal system as recent study results indicate, then it is almost certain that current population levels in the CSMA have been underrepresented. There is a significant problem with the density of oyster leases in and around Stump Sound in Onslow and Pender Counties. How will the DMF/MFC respond to this problem that is only getting worse? Similarly, you have a growing concern with the rash of pound net permits that you are allowing to a single family in the West and Long Bay areas. In proper numbers, these gears are acceptable. However, when allowed to reach a density such as has been currently allowed, problems will certainly increase.</p>
Tom Fuda		<p>I am in favor of the proposed management rule to adopt a 5 fish per-person bag limit for Atlantic bonito. I think it is important to put at least some precautionary measures in place to provide basic protection against over-exploitation of this species. By adopting this measure, I believe the actions by the state of NC will encourage other states along the Atlantic coast to adopt similar measures in their waters.</p>
Peter Farrell	Rhode Island	<p>As fisherman, we would appreciate the DEC to consider a five fish bag limit on Bonito in North Carolina. It would reflect on the species of the coast and the numbers in general. These are precious fish. We would like to see their numbers rise, and we would like to see assemblance of a further conservation for Bonito</p>
Andrew Campbell	Virginia	<p>I'm a long time North Carolina light tackle and fly fishing guide. Bonito and False Albacore are in some cases the species folks travel from out of state or even out of country to North Carolina to fish for.</p> <p>Beyond that they are sometimes the only fish biting in early Spring or late fall early winter. I too</p>

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		<p>often see guides and tourists taking way more then what I would consider usable and feel limits should be put in place so as not to imperil the stock.</p> <p>Thanks for your time and consideration ~ Flying Fish Charters</p>
Germain Cloutier	Maine	Please consider putting regulations in Atlantic Bonito, this is very important to at least out limits on fish that are doing fairly well and before they are in trouble. I support the need for regulations for Bonito, especially in North Carolina. Thank you!
David R Miller	Virginia	I believe in strict harvest limits for commercial bonita fishermen to prevent overfishing and decimation of the fishing stock.