



Fish Dealer Report

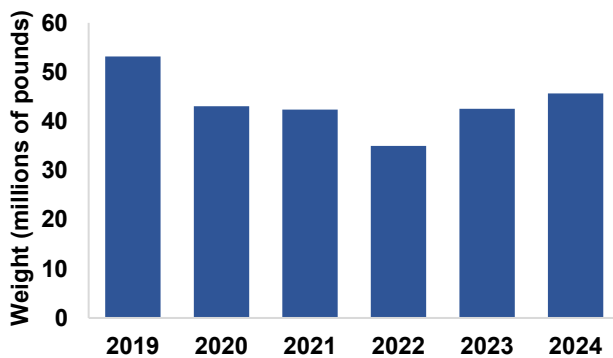
License & Statistics Section, PO Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557

June 2025

2024 COMMERCIAL LANDINGS REVIEW

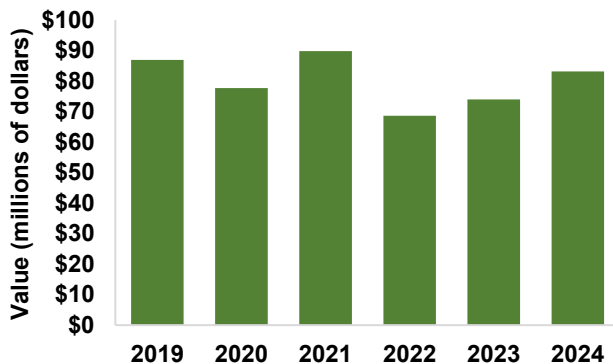
Commercial fishermen landed 45.7 million pounds of seafood in North Carolina in 2024. This was a 7.4% increase from the 2023 landings of 42.5 million pounds and a 5.7% increase from the five-year average (2019-2023) of 43.2 million pounds.

Total Landings by Weight



The estimated value for landings in 2024 was \$83.1 million, an increase of 12.4% from the 2023 estimated value of \$74.0 million and an increase of 4.7% from the five-year average of \$79.4 million.

Total Landings by Value



The top five species landed by weight were Blue Crab (hard crabs only), 18.6 million pounds; Shrimp, 7.7 million pounds; Striped Mullet, 2.4 million pounds; Summer Flounder, 2.2 million pounds; and Catfishes, 1.6 million pounds. The top five species landed by value were Blue Crab (hard crabs only), \$25.9 million; Shrimp, \$14.8 million; Eastern Oyster, \$8.2 million; Summer Flounder, \$6.5 million; and Atlantic Cutlassfish, \$2.0 million.

Several species exhibited notable increases in both commercial landings and ex-vessel value during 2024, including Striped Mullet, Sheepshead, and Eastern Oyster. Striped Mullet landings in 2024 increased by 27% compared to 2023, while ex-vessel value rose by 31%. Relative to the previous five-year average, landings and value were higher by 26% and 42%, respectively. Sheepshead also continued an upward trend, with 2024 landings and value increasing compared to 2023. More notably, when compared to the previous five-year average, 2024 landings increased by approximately 50%, and ex-vessel value rose by approximately 90%. Eastern Oyster landings and value in 2024 were the highest recorded since 2019. Compared to the five-year average, landings increased by approximately 35%. Additionally, there was an 18% increase in landings and a 16% increase in value relative to 2023.

Spot experienced a notable decline in 2024 following a strong year in 2023. Compared to the previous year, 2024 commercial landings decreased by 25%, and ex-vessel value declined by 36%. However, when evaluated against the five-year average, landings remained 3% above average, while ex-vessel value was 12% below the average. Sea Mullet have exhibited a consistent downward trend over the past three years. In 2024, landings declined by 25% and ex-vessel value by 23% compared to 2023. Relative to the five-year average, both landings and value were approximately 17% lower, reflecting a sustained decrease in harvest and market performance.

Values in this report are summarized. To see actual 2024 landings and value, please see the [2024 Annual Landings Bulletin](#).

STAFF CHANGES

Since the release of the Semi-Annual Dealer Report in December 2024, the License and Statistics Section has undergone several staffing changes.

As part of the Trip Ticket Program, Michael Thompson stepped down from his role as Port Agent Supervisor to pursue a new career opportunity. We thank Michael for his service and wish him well in his future endeavors. His position was filled in March 2025 by Kathryn Padgett (Kathryn.Padgett@deq.nc.gov, 252-515-5539).

Also in March 2025, Beth Johnson (Beth.Johnson@deq.nc.gov) joined the team as a full-time Data Control Clerk, filling a previously vacant position. Around the same time, Sharon Bissette-Martin departed from the Division. Recruitment is currently underway to fill the now-vacant part-time Data Control Clerk role.

In February 2025, Logan Waynick joined the team as the License Clerk, filling a previously vacant position. In May, Carol Ann Keener was appointed to the newly created position of Accounting/License Clerk. Both Logan and Carol Ann are based in the Morehead City office.

We also wish to recognize Mechelle Stone, who will be retiring on August 1, 2025, after 34 years of dedicated service to the Division. Mechelle's contributions have been invaluable, and she will be greatly missed. Staff are currently working to fill her full-time Data Control Clerk position.

Lastly, the Section was deeply saddened by the passing of Carolyn Piner on May 24, 2025. Carolyn retired on December 31, 2024, following 26 years of exemplary

service to the public, the License and Statistics Section, and the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries. Carolyn's warmth and professionalism left a lasting impression on all who worked with her. We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, and loved ones.

MANDATORY HARVEST REPORTING

New harvest reporting requirements will impact recreational and commercial fishermen starting December 1, 2025.

In the fall of 2023, the North Carolina General Assembly passed Session Law 2023-137. Section 6 of this legislation requires anyone holding a commercial fishing license who is engaged in a commercial fishing operation to report all fish harvested to the Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF), regardless of sale. Additionally, it requires any person who recreationally harvests Red Drum, Flounder, Spotted Seatrout (Speckled Trout), Striped Bass and Weakfish (Gray Trout) to report that harvest to the NCDMF.

This law will have direct impacts to seafood dealers, as commercial fishermen will now be required to unload their harvest, including their personal consumption harvest, at a seafood dealer within 48 hours of landing. Seafood dealers must indicate personal consumption harvest on trip tickets using one of the personal consumption disposition codes 2 (personal use), 31 (personal use for food), 38 (personal use for bait).

Seafood dealers who do not have the appropriate dealer license category will be allowed to write trip tickets for commercial fishermen who are harvesting catch for personal consumption by using the personal consumption disposition codes. Mandatory harvest reporting will be enforced by NCDMF's Marine Patrol, and enforcement will

UPCOMING NC MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION MEETING

August 20-22, 2025

The public may access the meeting virtually. Please visit the [MFC webpage](#) for updates and details.

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be phased in over a period of three years beginning December 1, 2025.

Additionally, any person who recreationally harvests Red Drum, Flounder, Spotted (Speckled) Seatrout, Striped Bass and Weakfish (Gray Trout) must report that harvest to NCDMF using an [online reporting form](#). This applies to Coastal Fishing Waters, Joint Fishing Waters and Inland Fishing Waters adjacent to Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters.

If you, or any of your fishermen, have questions about mandatory harvest reporting, please visit NCDMF's [Mandatory Harvest Reporting Page](#) or contact your port agent.

PROPOSED MFC RULE PACKAGE

A new proposed rule would require any seafood dealer that reports trip tickets electronically would also be required to report quota monitoring logs electronically. The addition of the Estuarine Flounder Dealer Permit in 2022 caused a 151% increase in the total number of dealers that hold at least one permit for fisheries monitored under a quota or allocation. Requiring electronic quota monitoring reporting for dealers that are already participating in electronic trip ticket submission is expected to yield significant savings of dealer and N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) employee time and resources at no additional cost to dealers.

A second proposed rule change would clarify a fish dealer is required to submit a trip ticket for all fish in the dealer's possession, even if they are being kept by a fisherman for personal consumption. The proposed amendment would align the MFC's recordkeeping requirements rule with N.C. General Statutes and the [MFC rule for commercial Mandatory Harvest Reporting Requirements](#) that was adopted in 2024. [State law](#) requires anyone holding a commercial fishing license who is engaged in a commercial fishing operation to report all fish harvested to NCDMF through a seafood dealer, regardless of sale, including all finfish, shellfish, and crustaceans.

More information about the proposed rules can be found on the MFC's [Proposed Rules](#) webpage for the 2025-2026 package. For questions about the MFC rulemaking

process, email [Catherine Blum](#), rules coordinator for the NCDMF.



OBSERVER TRIP SCHEDULING SYSTEM (OTSS)

Beginning in February 2025, the Observer Program started using the Observer Trip Scheduling System (OTSS) to schedule observations of certain gill net fishermen. Fishermen planning to use run-around, strike, drop, or drift gill nets (defined below and in Proclamation M-2-2025) do not need to report those plans into OTSS. Fishermen with plans use any other type of gill net must report their plans **one week in advance** through the OTSS automated hotline (833-487-8747) or online at <https://dmf.ncdenr.org/OTSSPublic/>.

The hotline and website are open **Monday through Wednesday**. On **Thursday**, OTSS selects which fishermen will be observed for the following week. The week is divided into three portions: **Monday–Tuesday**, **Wednesday–Thursday**, and **Friday–Sunday**.

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- Fishermen **not selected** will receive a confirmation number for each unselected week portion.
- Fishermen **selected** will be given the phone number of their assigned observer.

Selected fishermen must contact their observer **by 4:00 PM on Friday** to coordinate plans for the following week.

To fish gill nets other than run-around, strike, drop, or drift gill nets, fishermen must have either a confirmation number or an Observer present while actively fishing.

For more information, go to www.deq.nc.gov/OTSS.

For questions or assistance, contact the Observer Program at 252-515-5625 or observer.program@deq.nc.gov.

Exempted Gill Net Definitions:

- **Run-around, strike, or drop gill nets** - gill nets that are actively fished by either (1) using the boat to run a net around a school of fish, creating a closed circle, or (2) using the boat after the net is set to herd fish into the net without delay, whereby soak time does not exceed 30 minutes from the end of the set to the beginning of the haul.
- **Drift gill nets** - gill nets that are used to capture fish while being moved along by water currents whereby the net stays attached to the vessel from deployment through retrieval.



TRIP TICKET REMINDERS

Split Trips: Trip tickets include a field for “Transaction #” or “Trans #,” and there has been some confusion about what this field means. The transaction number is used when multiple trip tickets are written for fish caught on a single trip, also known as a ‘split trip’. The transaction number is basically a way of counting the number of tickets written out for a particular trip to avoid counting a single trip multiple times when NCDMF compiles landings data.

For example, when a fisherman harvests crabs and finfish in the same trip and sells the crabs at one dealer and the finfish at a second dealer, the first dealer should complete a trip ticket for the crabs with a transaction number of 1, but the second dealer should complete a trip ticket for the finfish with a transaction number of 2. Another example is if a crew of two licensed commercial fishermen were working together to fish a gill net and caught 100 pounds of fish that they split in half to sell to the dealer individually, then the first ticket written to the first fisherman would show transaction number 1 with 50 pounds, and the second ticket for the second fisherman would show transaction number 2 with the remaining 50 pounds.

When the Trip Ticket Program counts the number of trips for a particular species or gear type, only the trips with a transaction number of 1 are counted as individual trips. In this example, both fishermen would receive full credit for their landings, but because the second transaction number was entered as a 2, the Trip Ticket Program would not overestimate the number of trips and effort in the gill-net fishery.

Disposition Codes: The term ‘disposition’ refers to the intended use for the product recorded on the trip ticket. Common dispositions include food, bait, personal consumption, research, etc. Trip tickets include a field for ‘Disposition’ or “DSP.” Older paper trip tickets may not include this field, therefore, dealers must write-in the disposition code somewhere on the ticket. If the disposition field is left blank, the disposition will typically default to food.

If the disposition is not intended to be food, it is important to use this field, as disposition type can impact fisheries

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management decisions and will be an important part of the Mandatory Harvest Reporting requirements starting this December. Depicted below is a table of disposition codes and their descriptions.

Disposition Code	Disposition Description
0	No Disposition
1	Food
2	Personal Use
5	Aquaculture
6	Canned Pet Food
7	Animal Food
8	Bait
9	Reduction/Meal
10	Aquarium
11	Kept, Disposition Unknown
12	Biomedical Use
13	Packing, Only
14	Fertilizer
15	Research
31	Personal Use for Food
38	Personal Use for Bait
100	Reason not specified
101	No Market
602	Seized by Law Enforcement

Fishermen and Vessel Information: It is important for dealers to maintain up-to-date license numbers for their fishermen and vessels. This is especially important after license renewal season. Failure to record correct license information can make it appear as if fishermen are operating illegally, with an expired license. It may also cause fishermen to miss out on future opportunities such as economic assistance programs if landings are inappropriately assigned.

Contact Information: It is important to provide up-to-date contact information to NCDMF so Commercial Port Agents and other staff can reach seafood dealers when a question or issues arise. Failure to provide valid contact information can lead to Marine Patrol involvement if staff are unable to contact dealers regarding trip ticket and quota monitoring reporting.

Gill Nets: It is important to verify the type of gill net fished with fishermen and record the information correctly on the trip ticket. The Trip Ticket Program currently has five gear codes for gill nets: drift gill net (470); runaround gill net (475); anchored small-mesh gill net (426); anchored large-mesh gill net (427), and trammel net (530). Drift gill nets (470) are defined as nets used to capture fish while being moved along by water current, and the net is being actively fished and attended from deployment through retrieval. Run-around gill nets (475) are defined as nets that are set and then immediately retrieved. Strike and drop nets are also defined as nets that are set and then immediately retrieved and should be recorded as run-around gill net (475) trips. Anchored gill nets, also known as fixed or stationary gill nets, are defined as nets anchored or staked to the bottom, or some structure attached to the bottom, on both ends. While all gill nets have large and small mesh sizes, anchored gill nets are the only type defined by mesh size on trip tickets. On paper tickets, anchored small mesh gill nets (426) are designated as either “< 5 in.” or “SM” and anchored large mesh gill nets (427) are designated as either “>= 5 in.” or “LM.”

It is the responsibility of the fisherman to inform the dealer of their fishing activity, but it is the dealer’s responsibility to make sure trip tickets are filled out correctly. Failure to do so can directly impact businesses, as these data are used for items such as management decisions and relief programs.

VESL Program

VESL is North Carolina’s latest product for electronic trip ticket reporting. It eliminates the requirement for most, if not all, paper forms for seafood transactions requiring a trip ticket. It is an intuitive, easy-to-use, web-based reporting platform. Although VESL does not have all the features of the current PC Trip Ticket Software it has several advantages such as automatic backup, complete integration for dealers requiring federal reporting, and verification of Fisherman and Vessel numbers. You will not be tied to one device for entry, the web platform may be accessed by nearly any internet connected device, including cell-phone internet browsers. Contact NCDMF’s Quota Monitoring today to get started!

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TRANSITION FROM PC TRIP TICKET PROGRAM TO VESL

We have been informed by Bluefin Data, LLC that Claude Peterson, PC Trip Ticket’s developer and technical support, will be retiring at the end of 2025. As a result, Bluefin Data has announced that all reporting functionality of the PC Trip Ticket Program will be terminated by end of January 2026.

All North Carolina seafood dealers that are required to report electronically and are currently using the PC Trip Ticket Software will need to transition to VESL, a web-based trip ticket reporting platform. It is recommended that dealers consider transitioning to VESL before the end of the year. VESL was recently launched in North Carolina and is designed to meet both state and federal reporting requirements. We will be sending out additional information soon regarding this transition, so please be on the lookout for these important updates.

To ensure uninterrupted reporting, contact Josh Beil by phone or email at 252-515-5549 or Joshua.Beil@deq.nc.gov at the Division of Marine Fisheries to activate your VESL account.

We understand that this may be a major shift from your organization’s normal operations. We are dedicated to making this transition as smooth as possible, so if you have any questions or need assistance do not hesitate to reach out.

REMINDER FOR BLUEFIN TUNA DEALERS

We would like to remind seafood dealers that deal in Bluefin Tuna that changes have been made to reporting this species. This updated method is necessary to handle a glitch where updating trip tickets caused previously entered data in SAFIS to disappear. Due to this unexpected error, dealers have been required to re-enter the deleted information. A memo was sent out to all seafood dealers in May 2025 that reviews the issue and the new reporting procedure. If you did not get this memo or if you have any questions, please contact Josh Beil at (252)-515-5549 or Josh.Beil@deq.nc.gov.

TRIP TICKET CONTACTS

For questions regarding rules, procedures, or requirements, please contact your port agent at your local NCDMF office.

Elizabeth City	Alexis Rakestraw	252-337-5362 (cell) Alexis.Rakestraw@deq.nc.gov
Manteo	Haley Clinton	252-342-0156 (cell) 252-423-5258 (office) Haley.Clinton@deq.nc.gov
Morehead City	Chuck Davis	252-808-7935 (cell) 252-515-5548 (office) Chuck.Davis@deq.nc.gov
Washington	Jon Anglemyer	252-908-6786 (cell) Jon.Anglemyer@deq.nc.gov
Wilmington	Mackenzie Freeman	252-241-0118 (cell) 910-796-7307 (office) Mackenzie.Freeman@deq.nc.gov

For supplies, please contact one of our data clerks at 252-515-5545.

If you have any questions regarding use of the North Carolina Trip Ticket System software, contact Josh Beil at Joshua.Beil@deq.nc.gov or call 252-515-5549.

If you are interested in accessing commercial fisheries data or would like to request a summary of your trip ticket landings, please contact Meredith Whitten at Meredith.Whitten@deq.nc.gov or call 252-515-5525.



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