NC Marine Fisheries Commission

Fishery Management Plans

November 2026 Quarterly Business Meeting

Documents

FMP Updates Memo

FMP Schedule

FMP Development Tracker

Kingfishes FMP Amendment 1 Decision Document

Kingfishes Written Comments

Kingfishes Scoping Document

JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

JONATHAN HOWELL
Director

November 4, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC)

FROM: Jeffrey Dobbs, FMP Coordinator
Daniel Zapf, FMP Coordinator

SUBJECT: November 2026 FMP development and implementation status update

Status of State FMPs

Out of 13 State Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), the Southern Flounder, Kingfishes, Red Drum, and Blue Crab plans are currently under review. Updates for all 13 plans are provided in the table below.

FMP	Update
FMPs Under Review	
Southern Flounder Scheduled review: 2024	**<u>Amendment 4</u>** The recreational season occurred September 1-14, and the commercial season had various opening and closing dates for different area and gear combinations in accordance with Amendment 4 and quota management. Once landings data are finalized, they will be evaluated to determine if quota overages occurred. **<u>Amendment 5</u>** The MFC chairmen appointed nine members to the Southern Flounder Amendment 5 FMP Advisory Committee (AC), and the FMP AC will be scheduled soon. Following the FMP AC workshop, the Division will incorporate FMP AC input into the second draft of the plan and the MFC will vote to send the draft for public and MFC AC comment.
Red Drum Scheduled review: 2025	A scoping period was held from October 1–30, 2026 to solicit input from the public about stock concerns and management issues and strategies that could be addressed during the FMP review. During this time, the Division hosted four scoping meetings attended by 19 members of the public who provided input on Red Drum management. Additionally, 75 members of the public submitted online comments. The Division is reviewing management and evaluating scoping input and will present a process for completing the FMP review at the February 2027 MFC business meeting.

FMP	Update
Kingfishes Scheduled review: 2025	A scoping period was held from September 1–30, 2026 to solicit input from the public about stock concerns and management issues and strategies that could be addressed during the FMP review. After reviewing current management and considering scoping comments the Division concluded an Amendment to the Kingfishes FMP is necessary to re-evaluate and consider changes to current management strategies. At the November 2026 MFC business meeting, the MFC will vote to approve the goal and objectives for the draft Amendment 1 to the N.C. Kingfishes FMP. Adoption of Amendment 1 is tentatively scheduled to occur in early 2028.
Blue Crab Scheduled review: 2026	Review of the FMP began in July 2026, and a benchmark stock assessment underwent external review by a panel of independent peer reviewers during a workshop held November 3–5, 2026. Once a report is completed by the peer review panel, the Division will review the report and decide whether the assessment is suitable for management use. At the February 2027 MFC business meeting, the Division will present stock assessment results, peer review conclusions, the Division conclusion for whether the stock assessment will be used to inform management, and initial information about the FMP review.
FMPs with Requests Pending	
Bay Scallop Scheduled review: 2026	The Division requested to delay the scheduled plan review one year such that the review would begin in 2027. This request is pending approval by the DEQ Secretary.
River Herring Scheduled review: 2027	The Division requested to transition River Herring management from Amendment 2 to the N.C. River Herring FMP exclusively to the N.C. IJ FMP. This request is pending approval by the DEQ Secretary.
Remaining FMPs	
Shrimp Scheduled review: 2027	**<u>Amendment 2</u>** Rather than address Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) protection under the Shrimp FMP Amendment 2, the MFC directed the Division to develop more comprehensive management options to protect SAV habitat from all activities under the authority of the MFC, consistent with the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP). The draft 2026 CHPP is expected to include a framework for development of MFC rules for protection of habitats, including SAV.
Estuarine Striped Bass Scheduled review: 2027	**<u>Amendment 2</u>** The Division is evaluating data collected during the open harvest season in portions of the Tar-Pamlico and Neuse rivers in 2026 to inform whether the 2027 harvest season will be maintained or reduced.
Interjurisdictional FMP Scheduled review: 2028	No updates

FMP	Update
Striped Mullet Scheduled review: 2029	**Amendment 2** Per the Amendment 2 adaptive management framework requirements, an update to the Striped Mullet stock assessment is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2027.
Spotted Seatrout Scheduled review: 2030	**Amendment 1** Per the Amendment 1 adaptive management framework requirements, an update to the Spotted Seatrout stock assessment is tentatively scheduled to begin in mid-2027. For the second year in a row, the Spotted Seatrout population in N.C. suffered a large-scale cold stun event. When available, data from 2026 will be analyzed to determine the effect of both the 2025 and 2026 cold stuns on the Spotted Seatrout stock in N.C. Results and conclusions will be presented to the MFC when the analysis is complete.
Eastern Oyster Scheduled review: 2030	**Amendment 5** Amendment 5 adopted a new approach for setting season lengths in the cultch supported mechanical harvest fishery based on preseason oyster abundance sampling. Division staff have completed preseason sampling, set the minimum season length for this year, and issued a proclamation to open the fishery.
Hard Clam Scheduled review: 2030	**Amendment 3** The adopted management strategy phases out mechanical clam harvest after the 2027-2028 season. Until then, the mechanical clam harvest fishery will open annually in December and close annually on March 31.

DRAFT FOR DEQ SECRETARIAL REVIEW

DRAFT N.C. FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW SCHEDULE (July 2026–June 2031) Revised August 1, 2026					
SPECIES (Date of Last Action)	2026–2027	2027–2028	2028–2029	2029–2030	2030–2031
SOUTHERN FLOUNDER (8/25)					
RED DRUM (8/17)					
KINGFISHES (8/20)					
BLUE CRAB (5/23)					
BAY SCALLOP (8/20)^					
SHRIMP (5/24)					
ESTUARINE STRIPED BASS (3/26)					
RIVER HERRING (8/22)=					
INTERJURISDICTIONAL (6/22) -					
STRIPED MULLET (5/24)					
SPOTTED SEATROUT (3/25)					
EASTERN OYSTER (5/25)					
HARD CLAM (5/25)					

^ In 2024 the DEQ Secretary approved the division request to delay the plan review one year to reduce overlap in ongoing plan reviews. **Schedule assumes a follow-up request to the DEQ Secretary is approved to delay one additional year whereby the plan review would begin in 2027. Doing so would align with the comprehensive review of the Shrimp FMP and MFC rule development for protection of habitat within the MFC's authority, consistent with the N.C. Coastal Habitat Protection Plan.**

- In 2024 the DEQ Secretary approved the division request to delay the plan review one year to reduce overlap in ongoing plan reviews.

= The division will be requesting that the DEQ Secretary approve transitioning River Herring management from Amendment 2 to the N.C. River Herring FMP exclusively to the N.C. FMP for Interjurisdictional Fisheries, which adopts, by reference, FMPs approved by the ASMFC or federal councils (e.g., the ASMFC Amendment 2 to the Interstate FMP for Shad and River Herring). If the DEQ Secretary approves this request, the final FMP schedule will not include River Herring

This schedule assumes no rulemaking is required to implement plan amendments.

FMP Development Tracker - November 2026

Fishery Management Plans	Division forms Plan Development Team	Division discuss issues and Goals and Objectives	Hold Scoping Meetings and Scoping Period	Division drafts FMP	Hold FMP Advisory Committee Workshop	Division revises FMP	MFC Approve Draft FMP for Public Review	Public and Committee Review of Plan	MFC Select Preferred Management Options	MFC Final Adoption of FMP
Southern Flounder					TBD					
Red Drum					TBD					
Kingfishes					TBD					
Bay Scallop	Division requesting schedule change from DEQ Secretary									
Blue Crab	Opened July 1, 2026									

Legend

	Step Completed
	Step In-Progress
	Step Upcoming

DECISION DOCUMENT

Kingfishes (Sea Mullet) Fishery Management Plan

Draft Amendment 1



This document was developed to help the MFC track previous activity and prepare for upcoming actions related to the Kingfishes FMP draft Amendment 1.

November 2026

Summary

Three species of Kingfishes occur in North Carolina waters: Southern, Gulf, and Northern. The term Kingfish is used when referring to a specific species, such as Southern Kingfish, while Kingfishes or Kingfishes stock complex refers to the three species collectively. All three species are managed collectively under the North Carolina Kingfishes Fishery Management Plan (FMP). **At the November 2026 Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) business meeting, Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) staff will update the MFC with results of the Kingfishes scoping period and the MFC will vote to adopt the draft Amendment 1 goal and objectives. The Division also requests the MFC provide input on other topics or issues to consider during development of draft Amendment 1.**

Background

The scheduled 5-year review of the Kingfishes FMP began in 2025. The 2007 North Carolina Kingfishes FMP established the use of annual trend analysis and triggers to monitor the Kingfishes stock and identify potential management concerns. Results are presented to the MFC as part of the annual FMP Review. Activation of any two triggers two years in a row warrants further evaluation of the data and potential management action. Information Updates to the FMP were completed in 2015 and 2020. In 2015, the best available data and techniques used for the trend analysis and triggers were refined and modified to better assess population trends. In 2020, the annual FMP Review served as the comprehensive 5-year review.

As part of the current FMP review, available data were explored to examine the possibility of conducting a stock assessment for the Kingfishes stock complex in North Carolina waters. However, because the Kingfishes stock complex is transboundary and consists of multiple species with their own unique biological characteristics, the stock assessment was not successful and could not estimate stock status relative to whether the stock is overfished or overfishing is occurring.

However, to further investigate the relative health of the Kingfishes stock complex when they are in North Carolina waters, recreational and commercial landings data, fishery-independent indices, and age and length composition data were explored. Upon reviewing the data, the DMF concluded:

- the data for Kingfishes are limited, but
- the available data is informative of the Kingfishes stock complex, and
- there is no immediate concern for the Kingfishes stock complex based on trends in length and age data and abundance as indicated by available fishery-independent survey data.

Scoping

The scoping period for the Kingfishes FMP occurred from September 1–30, 2026. Two in-person meetings were held, Thursday, September 3, 2026, at the Morehead City Central District Office (CDO) and Thursday, September 17, 2026, at the Wilmington Regional Office (WIRO). The meeting at the CDO was also streamed online and a listening station was available at the Manteo Field Office.

Between the two scoping meetings there were 31 attendees (27 in-person and four online), and seven public comments were provided. Comments specific to Kingfishes and Kingfishes management included:

- Changes in gill net mesh sizes and market factors prevent catching smaller sea mullet because they cannot be sold.

- Recommendation for a 15 fish per person bag limit and an 8" minimum size limit in the recreational fishery.
- Comments about the number of commercial trips going down and Kingfishes landings staying the same, so it is not necessary to change management.
- Not changing anything until there is a biological reason to do so, the stock is not assessed, no immediate concern for the stock, several triggers have become unreliable because of survey changes, and there is no biological evidence to support changing management. Until there is a problem, there should be no management changes.
- Kingfishes have good and bad years and the commercial fishery depends on them.
- Concern about gill nets set close to the beach and the need to enforce existing rules.

Following each scoping meeting DMF staff were available to answer questions and take comments from those who did not wish to speak during the public comment session. Comments provided included:

- Wanting more information about what changes could occur in the small mesh gill net fishery. Not wanting to see any changes in the small mesh gill net fishery.
- Any management changes need to be based on science.
- The Kingfishes commercial fishery differs depending where you are in the state. The northern part of the state tends to land smaller fish than the southern part of the state.
- Commercial regulations on Spot seem to be driving commercial effort for Kingfishes, because Kingfishes are one of the few species the commercial fishery can catch without any harvest limits. If Spot bycatch is excessive (during the closed commercial season for Spot) they would stop trying to fish for Kingfishes.
- Use different gill net mesh sizes depending on where they are fishing, use smaller mesh sizes in Morehead City area than in Wilmington because of differences in fish size, and change the mesh size used throughout the season.
- This is a recreationally dominated fishery.
- Suggestion to manage the three species separately.
- Interest in a 10" minimum size limit and a high recreational bag limit.
- The recreational and commercial fisheries are more concerned with quality (larger fish) over quantity.
- No overall concern for the stock. The fish seem to be available, but the fishery is seasonal.
- When shrimp trawls are working in an area it is harder to catch Kingfishes.
- Interest in knowing harvest and regulations in neighboring states.
- Concern about the distance from shore requirements for anchored gill nets in the ocean and how those rules may not be followed, or how those rules affect catch of Kingfishes.

Online comments were accepted during the scoping period from September 1–30, 2026. During the scoping period, 54 online comments were received: 45 from recreational fishery participants, four from commercial fishery participants, four who identified as participating in the commercial and recreational fisheries, and one who did not specify which fishery they participate in. Online comments specific to Kingfishes included:

- 14 commenters did not want to see management changes.
- 10 commenters indicated there was concern for the stock based on observed declines (less abundance, smaller sized fish).
- 21 commenters indicated support for changing management, and of those who supported management changes
    - 18 supported implementing a bag limit (generally 5–50 fish but most specific bag limit suggestions were for 10–20 fish or 20+ fish).
    - 17 supported implementing minimum size limits (generally 9–10 inches but most specific suggestions were for a 10-inch minimum size limit which aligns with the length at 100% maturity).
    - Two supported closed seasons (March and April to coincide with the beginning of the spawning season and December 16–December 31 to mirror the commercial Atlantic croaker closure).
    - One supported allowing more harvest of Kingfishes from shrimp trawls.
    - One supported changing the minimum gill net mesh size to 2-5/8" and banning overnight gill net soaks.
- 13 commenters noted the need to either account for shrimp trawl discards in management or to further restrict (time, area, etc.) the use of gill nets and shrimp trawls.
- Three commenters noted the need to base decisions on data and/or sound science.
- One commenter noted that restrictions on other species have shifted effort to species like Kingfishes.

FMP Review Next Steps

After reviewing current management and considering scoping comments, an Amendment to the Kingfishes FMP is necessary to update current management strategies and consider changes to current management. Existing management strategies have been in place since 2007 and have not been re-evaluated except for Information Updates completed in 2015 and 2020 that determined management changes were not necessary.

The current management strategy monitors the Kingfishes stock complex annually using trend analysis and triggers. This framework is vague and does not specify which conditions or data trends might indicate the need for management changes or the process by which management changes would be made. In addition, review of the triggers in 2025 concluded most were set too conservatively, survey changes have limited their effectiveness, or survey changes have eliminated the ability to use specific triggers moving forward. Draft Amendment 1 will update the monitoring framework to use the most appropriate and current available scientific information and will include an adaptive management framework outlining a management response when data indicates it is necessary.

Given there are no recreational or commercial (note rule 15A NCAC 03J .0202(5) limits harvest of all finfish from shrimp trawls) restrictions in place directly limiting the harvest of Kingfishes*, and comments received during scoping indicate immediate management changes should be considered, draft Amendment 1 will provide options for immediate management changes that could be implemented independent of the adaptive management framework upon adoption of the plan.

*Rule 15A NCAC 03J .0202(5) states it shall be unlawful to possess finfish incidental to shrimp or crab trawl operations from December 1 through March 31 unless the weight of the combined catch of shrimp and crabs exceeds the weight of finfish, except an additional 300 pounds of Kingfish (*Menticirrhus* spp.) may be taken south of Bogue Inlet.

Background information about Kingfishes life history, trends in the recreational fishery, trends in the commercial fishery, economic impacts, characteristics of the commercial gill net fishery, and landings and discards in the shrimp trawl fishery will also be updated as part of draft Amendment 1.

Draft Amendment 1 Goal and Objectives

Action: At the November 2026 MFC business meeting, the MFC will vote to adopt the goal and objectives for draft Amendment 1 to the North Carolina Kingfishes FMP.

The goal of the N.C. Kingfishes (*Menticirrhus* spp.) Fishery Management Plan is to manage the Kingfishes stock complex in N.C. waters to provide protection for and access to the stock complex using science-based decision-making processes. The following objectives will be used to achieve this goal:

- Develop N.C. specific quantitative analyses to monitor the Kingfishes stock complex in N.C. waters and manage in consideration of available biological, social and economic, fishery, habitat, and environmental data.
- Identify and support research to increase our understanding of biology and population dynamics of the Kingfishes stock complex in N.C. waters.
- Promote outreach to increase public awareness regarding management of the Kingfishes stock complex in N.C. waters and encourage stakeholder involvement in fishery management activities.
- Evaluate and recommend habitat management consistent with the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) regarding critical habitats and environmental quality to promote growth, survival, and reproduction of the Kingfishes stock complex in N.C. waters.

Draft Amendment 1 Timeline

The tentative timeline for development of draft Amendment 1 to the Kingfishes FMP is:

November 2026	MFC approves draft Amendment 1 Goal and Objectives
Winter 2026/Spring 2027	DMF develops first draft of Amendment 1
May/August 2027	DMF meets with FMP Advisory Committee (AC) to revise first draft of Amendment 1
Summer/Fall 2027	DMF develops second draft of Amendment 1 incorporating FMP AC input
August/November 2027	MFC votes to send draft of Amendment 1 for public and AC review
September 2027/January 2028	MFC AC and public review of draft Amendment 1
November 2027/February 2028	MFC selects preferred management options
Winter/Spring 2028	Legislative review of draft Amendment 1
February/May 2028	MFC votes on final adoption of Amendment 1
TBD	DMF implements Amendment 1 management strategies

*Red outline indicates current step

N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission
November 2026 Quarterly Business Meeting

Written public comments submitted online during the September 1 – 30, 2026 scoping period for the N.C. Kingfishes Fishery Management Plan Review

Name	State/Province	Sector	Comment
James Armel	South Carolina	Recreational	The stock is overfished on the OuterBanks.Implement a 10 fish limit and the use of only 2 fishing rods .
Brian Brumbaugh	North Carolina	Recreational	I fish 3-4 days per week on my boat, from Little River to the Shallotte River, and many of the "creeks" in between. I have lived and fished here for 4 years. There are mullet everywhere! School after school after school! Anywhere I fish you see "V's" in the water. This year, I have seen more jumping mullet and many are absolutely huge…sometimes wonder if it's actually a puppy drum!
Kenneth Broadwell	North Carolina	Both	There are already too many restrictions on fish species. Leave Va mullet alone.
Konstantinos Mousios	South Carolina	Recreational	I'm being fishing sea mullets at Topsail the last 35 years at the same spot every fall. Overall the numbers are declining. I wouldn't mind a number limit for recreational fishing BUT the netters are getting more aggressive every year. Fishing very close to surf using clear plastic net and catching 1000's pound of spots and mullets won't help you manage the fish population.
Alan Marlowe	North Carolina	Recreational	Leave it alone. It's the citizens right to harvest fish for consumption. We need to focus on the resource not the industry. I agree with size limits and creel but not seasons. Sea mullet are in abundance where I live so until We have concrete data showing the stock assessment leave it alone. We are tired of having to be educated on when and what we can fish for. Fisheries is out of control.
Marc Boettger	North Carolina	Recreational	North Carolina currently has no minimum size limit for kingfish (southern, gulf, and northern), despite the species being regularly targeted in the surf and nearshore fishery. I recommend the Division/Commission adopt a 9–10 inch total length minimum, which clears published length-at-maturity thresholds for all three species, roughly 7.5" for southern kingfish, 9.1" for gulf kingfish, and 10.1" for northern kingfish, the binding constraint in a combined rule. Because all three species are short-lived (max ages of roughly 4–6 years) and commonly caught around 11–12 inches, this range protects immature fish without meaningfully restricting the existing fishery. A modest 9–10 inch minimum offers low-cost insurance against localized recruitment pressure while remaining biologically grounded and economically minimal in impact. I respectfully urge adoption of this limit as a sound, science-based management step for the kingfish fishery.
Phillip Johnson	North Carolina	Recreational	NO CHANGE!!!! Seamullet are one of the only fish recreational fisherman can still catch enough of to make fishing at the NC coast worth the trip. Believe it or not for some of us it's not only a sport it's a way to feed our families. It is absolutely insane to me how far the DMF has tightened the screw on size limits and daily limits on what we catch and take back home with us. We got to start using some common sense with this mess! How can a recreational fisherman affect the fish populations

Name	State/Province	Sector	Comment
			by fishing with a rod and reel? Commercial fisherman need to go further out to drop their nets. I literally was surf fishing years ago on the cape lookout national seashore for a week. There wasn't one day we didn't see several commercial fisherman (25 different boats) we counted circling the island. We saw dozens upon dozens of puffer fish, spot, pompano, sea mullet, and black drums too small for a recreational fisherman to keep if caught by rod and reel washed up and dead on the shore. Are pinfish going to be next? I would one day in the foreseeable future hope to take my daughter fishing ,but from the looks of things I might have to start surf fishing from South Carolina or Virginia!
Phil Sorrells	North Carolina	Recreational	We need reduced creel limits. Also, we need a size limit like a minimum length ot 10". Stop people from keeping those small ones and let them grow up. If we don't do something, we will continue to see a decline in the reproduction rate. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
Russ McLamb	North Carolina	Recreational	I believe they're should be a minimum size limit. I see a lot of folks keep small and very small mullets especially pier fishermen. And also some on the surf. I also think there should be a limit of mullet per person similar to the spot regulations. I love to surf fish. And I always throw back the small ones. It's definitely not the case with all people fishing. But I've seen mullet and especially spot numbers decline over the last several years. Not sure if limits would help. I also believe construction for homes and other properties have contributed to the decline as well. Thanks.
Jimmy Powers	North Carolina	Recreational	When I was younger 30 years ago whiting was easier to catch while surf fishing. They like other species of fish need to be managed because of the decline in numbers.
Bryon Schmitt	North Carolina	Recreational	State data does not show concerning declines in kingfish populations. This is more than in needed regulation it is overreach and we shouldn't even be talking about this or further restrictions on the Shrimping industry. This is just another assault driven by extremist groups using political influence and power to destroy coastal economies. If they insist on attacking working families and coastal communities the state and federal government need to end all matching funds and grants and refuse any research or data these groups hold sway over in any way! It's time to end the extremism. They want us all to be eating foreign seafood and pond raised shrimp raised in a pond and fed manure! Stop the madness!
Gregory Whitley	North Carolina	Recreational	The population of these fish has greatly declined all along the NC coast. I assume it is due to commercial trawling and netting and fear that my children will no longer be able to enjoy this natural resource in the near future. Something needs to change.
Charles Freeman	North Carolina	Recreational	THIS COMMITTE IN NC IS A JOKE WE ALL CAN GO TO SC OR VIRGINIA AND FISH AND KEEP FISH .OH YEA AND IF YOU ARE COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN AS LONG AS THEYGREASE YALLS POCKETS ITS OK,,,,,,,,,,,,, NC FISHERIES IS A JOKE
Tyler Tschopp	North Carolina	Recreational	I think we do need a size limit on these. I observe many people keeping sea mullets well under the 10" mark and keeping coolers full. I think limits should align with that of spots and croaker.
Tom Filler	North Carolina	Recreational	Need a minimum size limit along with daily limit. This is the only way to approve the stock.
Cas Prewitt	North Carolina	Recreational	No changes needed on the recreational side. Focus on gill nets and inshore trawlers.

Name	State/Province	Sector	Comment
William Rash	North Carolina	Recreational	Thank you for allowing us to comment. I fish for whiting every fall at OBX. I have noticed a decline in catch numbers and size in the last two years. However that did follow three outstanding years in both size and numbers. I do understand that fish populations go through natural cycles, perhaps it would be wise to put limits on our catch and keep. I think a limit of five fish (any size)/day would be about right. Also limit the commercial netting if that's possible. Thanks again for the opportunity to comment
Nicholas Spivey	North Carolina	Recreational	Yes, the once abundant king fish is in decline, as with many other NC species, based on my anecdotal experience. A stock assessment and viability analysis is appropriate at this stage to determine if catch limits are appropriate and under what circumstances.
Timothy Minch	North Carolina	Recreational	There should be a creel limit and size limit on all fishes. Especially sea mullet and pompano.
Greg Sorrell	North Carolina	Recreational	I have seen a steady decline in the population and ask the commission to protect this resource with limits on creel and size limits.
Kevin Blanton	North Carolina	Recreational	Why don't you include the shrimp trawl bycatch against the commercial landings? They are killing millions of finfish. Yet you make up some number as a mortality rate and hold that against the recreational fishermen. Help me understand why your rules are so one sided.
Bryant Adams	North Carolina	Recreational	I believe a daily limit on sea mullets and a length size would not be a bad thing. As long as it is in reason. A limit of 20 and 12 inches or greater would be fine
Wallace Mcanulty	North Carolina	Recreational	Please include shrimp bycatch numbers in the stock assessment. They are the largest removal of kingfishes from the fishery and it’s not even close
Marklan Meadows	North Carolina	Recreational	I always only keep fish I will use each year. I fish early Spring and late Fall. I only go 2-4 5-day trips a year. I know how many pounds of fish I will eat each 6 months. I keep no more than that. About 8 years ago before the Flounder restrictions went into affect I would take all my trips to Buxton, buy a beach driving permit and fish the point and Harreras inlet. I would target my one Drum a day then the rest of the day go after my limit of Flounder and Sheepshead. I rarely, if ever caught my limit. Once the Flounder restriction went into affect the season to catch them was not the time of year I was taking my trips. That forced me to change my location to Nags Head and no longer had a reason to buy a beach driving permit any longer. I would still get my one Drum a day if I were lucky but I would walk out on the rocks at the Oregon Inlet to catch it. The rest of my time I would target Sheepshead from either the rocks or from the Bonner Bridge Pier. This year you have dropped my limit on Sheepshead head to 5, but the pounds of fish I hope to keep to last me 6 months has not changed. If I get my limit of my one Drum and 5 Sheepshead in a day, it will force me to target new species I usually never would target, like Black Drum and King Fish. My comment about King Fish is you are forcing people to target other species every time you put stricter limits on certain species. Where in my case if I plan to only keep 40 pounds of fillets a year it would be spread out over Founder, Red Drum, Black Drum, and Trout. If I no longer am able to get enough to keep there, it forces me to target, King Fish, Pompano etc. that I normally never fish for.

Name	State/Province	Sector	Comment
Richard Allebach	Pennsylvania	Recreational	I believe you should put a limit on the catch of sea mullet before the stocks are depleted.
William Creech	North Carolina	Recreational	The answer is quite simple. Get those nets out of the water and you will need more Marine Fishery Officers to patrol the water and beaches. It pissess me off to see all of those shrimp boats dragging those nets so close to shore. I could throw one of my long rods and hit them. Why is it that SC has more liberal limits than we do???? Is their board more competent than ours??
Lindy Mcghee	North Carolina	Recreational	request size limits on these fish. also request catch limits
Michael Hayes	North Carolina	Recreational	I catch plenty of them if you know what your doing you can to
Mick Brown	North Carolina	Recreational	There definitely needs to be a size limit and lower creel limit. These fish seem to be less numerous and smaller every year.
Douglas Smith	North Carolina	Recreational	For years we fished with rod and reel without licenses and hassle from government agencies. While there are never enough harvest or kill rules placed upon commercial fishing vessels but the rod and reel is not hurting the population. Ever since a license was required catch limits, size limits, closed seasons and more continue to plague the recreational fishing community. We are sick. Sick of taxation without representation. Marine fisheries board should be disbanded.
John Tollefsrud	North Carolina	Both	I would like to see our estuaries protected. send all trawlers at lease one mile offshore. no excuse for them to be inside.
Stephen Taylor	West Virginia	Recreational	The king fish have been the one fish we can count on catching in numbers with decent quality in both our April and October fishing trips.
James McGlinn	North Carolina	Recreational	In my Fishing off the shore and some of the peers in North Carolina and South Carolina, I have found that the availability of decent size kingfishers has decreased considerably over the last five years or so.
Marc Boettger	North Carolina	Recreational	Shrimp Trawl bycatch should be included in any FMP going forward in NC. The court ruling made it clear that this purposful gap in the data is not sustainable.
Clarence Hilliard	North Carolina	Recreational	STOP INSHORE SHRIMPING AND GILL NETTING and all species of sea creatures will improve. Shrimping or netting should not be allowed within the 3 mile territorial limits.
Dick Gray	North Carolina	Recreational	I love to catch and eat Sea Mullet as do all my friends. I don't want to see the stock wasted so a minimum size limit would be fine. Maybe 9 inches as Sea Mullet do have a lot of meat on them for their size. Maybe 25 per day per person. Thanks, Dick Gray

Name	State/Province	Sector	Comment
Matthew Lewis	North Carolina	Commercial	Please leave the sea mullets alone - there is no shortage. Recreationally they are not a targeted species necessarily but pier, beach, and waterway they are abundant. Why doesn't the DMF go after sharks. Way too many sharks. Take the sharks out and there will be more fish. Everyone knows this in their hearts because it makes sense. Not a whole lot of people fish for high quantities of sea mullets in NC.
William William	North Carolina	Recreational	Never had a problem catching sea mullet. They Seem to be plentiful. However, I would support size and creel limits.
Chris Dionigi	North Carolina	Recreational	Thank you for conducting a scoping session on Kingfish management. It is vitally important that we maintain healthy fish stocks and avoid the overharvest of any particular species. One factor that I would like to see changed is a greater consideration is the impact of invasive species, such as lionfish (Pterois volitans). Lionfish prey on already pressured species such as snapper and grouper and by that place additional pressure on Kingfish when people target them in response to declining fish stocks. Yet, invasive fish provide relatively little recreational or commercial value. In that sense, they represent a “double loss” for our state. I urge you to consider developing a comprehensive coastal and marine invasive species management plan that focuses on preventing the introduction of additional invasive species and limiting the range expansion of species that are already established. Control of existing populations by encouraging the intentional overharvest of invasive fish can also help. I think that you will find that both recreational and commercial fishers willing to help. Species-by-species and place-by-place efforts, while important, are not sufficient on their own. Invasive species management should be integrated into broader plans that coordinate the resources, expertise, and capacities of private, commercial, recreational, local, state, and federal partners. Groups such as the Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force, North American Invasive Species Management Association, and others can help form the necessary partnerships. A coordinated, comprehensive approach would help protect our native fisheries, strengthen the resilience of our coastal ecosystems, and better safeguard the long-term economic and recreational value of our marine resources. Thank you Chris Dionigi Chapel Hill, NC

Name	State/Province	Sector	Comment
Eric Blackburn	North Carolina	Both	I THINK THE FISHERY IS FINE . DUE TOO THE TIME OF YEAR THE FISH ARE HERE WEATHER REGULATES THE FISHERMEN. ITS A VALUABLE CROP FOR FISHERMEN WHOESALERS AND RETAIL MARKETS UP AND DOWN THE EAST COAST . NORMALLY ITS ONLY TO FISH 4 MONTHS OUT OF THE YEAR
Earl Sadler III	North Carolina	Both	I've spent a lifetime on the water as a commercial fisherman, and from what I've seen firsthand, I don't believe there needs to be any major changes to the way sea mullet are currently being managed. The fishery has regulations in place for a reason, and I believe the current management measures are doing their job. We need to be careful about making changes based on the idea that there is a shortage when the fishermen who are actually on the water aren't seeing the same thing. Commercial fishermen see these fish throughout the year. We see when they move, where they move, and how catches can change depending on weather, water temperature, location, and conditions. A change in landings doesn't automatically mean there is a shortage of fish. I'm not against good management. I'm against making unnecessary changes to a fishery that is already being managed responsibly. If the science shows that changes are truly necessary, then I'm willing to listen. But until there is clear evidence that the current management is failing, I don't believe we need additional restrictions or major changes to the sea mullet fishery. We want a healthy sea mullet population just as much as anybody. This is our livelihood, and none of us have an interest in hurting the resource. The best approach is to continue managing the fishery responsibly while listening to the commercial fishermen who are out there every day. In my opinion, the current management should stay in place unless there is solid evidence showing that a change is actually needed.
Travis Benfield	North Carolina	Recreational	To the Division of Marine Fisheries and Marine Fisheries Commission: I am a licensed North Carolina recreational angler submitting comment during the Kingfishes scoping period. I'm writing not just about sea mullet, but about the credibility of DMF's management process itself — because before this Division asks recreational fishermen to trust its judgment on a new species, it needs to answer for how badly it has mismanaged an existing one. On Kingfishes specifically: DMF's own scoping document states plainly that no concerning trends have been identified in the Kingfishes stock, and that no management measures currently limit harvest of the species. Good. I am asking the Division to hold that line. Absent a demonstrated conservation need backed by real stock assessment data, there is no justification for imposing new recreational restrictions on this fishery. If DMF's history with southern flounder is any indication,

Name	State/Province	Sector	Comment
			"we're just gathering input" has a way of turning into permanent, disproportionate restrictions on recreational access within a few years. I want that concern on the record now, before any amendment is drafted. On the pattern DMF needs to break — southern flounder: • Recreational anglers get a single 14-day season (currently Sept. 1–14) with a one-fish-per-person daily bag limit and a 15-inch minimum. • Commercial operations, by contrast, operate under a 50/50 quota split with recreational (as of Amendment 4) and effectively fish flounder nearly year-round across multiple gear types and management areas — mobile gear with 25-fish-per-day trip limits, ocean trawl trips with 12,500–15,000-lb limits, pound net seasons running into fall. • By DMF's own FAQ, the recreational sector has exceeded its allowable catch every year since Amendment 3 took effect — inside a season that's already been cut to two weeks and one fish. That's not evidence of reckless recreational fishermen; it's evidence that the recreational allocation itself is too small to function, no matter how tightly the season is squeezed. • Compare that to South Carolina, which faced the same regional stock decline and responded with a 5-fish-per-person, 10-fish-per-boat daily limit and a 16-inch minimum — enforced year-round, with no season closure at all. South Carolina anglers get five fish, 365 days a year. North Carolina anglers get one fish, 14 days a year. Same fish, same coastline, same conservation problem, wildly different burden on the people who fish for food and recreation rather than profit. That gap is not a rounding error. It's the product of an allocation process that treats recreational access as the easiest lever to pull and commercial harvest as untouchable, regardless of which sector is actually driving overage. What I'm asking DMF to do: 1. On Kingfishes, commit publicly that any future management measures will be proportional to actual, demonstrated stock risk — not adopted preemptively because it's administratively convenient. 2. Use this review, and any future FMP process, to revisit the recreational/commercial allocation formula on southern flounder. A state that manages to keep a fishery open with a 5-fish daily limit year-round should not require its neighbor to run a 14-day, 1-fish season and still miss quota. 3. Be transparent, going forward, about how allocation decisions are actually made between sectors — not just how bag limits and seasons are announced after the fact. Recreational fishermen are not the problem in North Carolina's fisheries. We are consistently asked to absorb the deepest cuts while commercial allocations stay comparatively protected, and then told the numbers didn't work out anyway. I'd like a response addressing how this scoping process will avoid repeating that outcome with Kingfishes. Thank you for considering this comment.
Harry Shepherd	North Carolina	Recreational	I think it's about time. Sea Mullets in my opinion should not be harvested by net or hook during the months of March and April. These fish spawn during this period. So tho help the species survive for

Name	State/Province	Sector	Comment
			generations of other anglers. I'm all in. People over fish them in the spring. There should be a bag limit of 30 per day and 10 inches or more.
John Williams	North Carolina	Recreational	What do you thinknis going to happen when you don't count by-catch from shrimping. There by-catch should count against them
Dwain Mckeithan	North Carolina	Recreational	Believe fisheries department has ruined the opportunity for local recreational fishing. Started with flounder. Need to worry about other issues and keep your hands out of size and limits.
William Harvey	North Carolina	Recreational	It is high time some reasonable limits are put on these fish. People take way more than they need. A 15 fish per day limit is perfectly reasonable, more than you can eat.
Richard Harvey	North Carolina	Recreational	I'd like to see a minimum keeper size and maximum limit of 10 per person. People keep way too many small ones and wonder why they don't catch many bigger.
Frederick Creech	North Carolina	Recreational	I believe there should be a minimum size for keeping this species. 12"+ Also would support a 10 to 15 daily limit. Thanks for wanting to protect this important species
Michael Pruitt	North Carolina	Recreational	We need a size limit and bag limit
Michael Pruitt	North Carolina	Recreational	We need a size limit and bag limit
Lucas Simmons	North Carolina	Commercial	I believe the sea mullet fishery should stay open. There is no shortage of fish. The weather patterns and ocean temps change constantly and affect the migration of sea mullets. With that being said the size and quality of fish along with the population I believe are as healthy as can be
Maurice Mann	North Carolina	Commercial	I think you could do better for commercial fisherman to allow more seamullet.while shrimping.its a waste to throw them back.when your trawling.by keeping them it helps with the fuel prices to help pay for fuel.
Rob Horne	North Carolina	Commercial	I would like to see any closure run concurrently with the croaker closed season..if further restrictions are needled make the minimum size 2 5/8 mesh. Then if further restrictions are needed ban overnight soaks. I believe these measures would definitely help the stock.
Carla Ransdell	North Carolina	Other	Downtown newbern has alot of dead fish washing up!

SCOPING DOCUMENT

KINGFISHES FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Scoping Period: September 1 – September 30, 2026



SCAN TO SUBMIT ONLINE COMMENTS

North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality
North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell Street
P.O. Box 769
Morehead City, NC 28557

SCOPING DOCUMENT

KINGFISHES LEADS

For questions about Kingfishes biology, life history, and management, please contact:

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252-515-5647

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SCAN TO SUBMIT ONLINE COMMENTS

SCAN TO VIEW KINGFISHES SCOPING INFORMATION AND PRESENTATION

SCOPING DOCUMENT

Important terms to know as you review this scoping document:

Three species of Kingfishes occur in North Carolina waters: Southern, Gulf and Northern. The term **Kingfish** is used when referring to a specific species, such as Southern Kingfish, while **Kingfishes** or **Kingfishes stock complex** refers to the three species collectively. Kingfishes are relatively small, fast-growing, coastal species that mature around age 1 or 2 (about 8 ¼ inches). In North Carolina the maximum observed age is 7 with most fish ranging from 0 to 4 years of age. Most fish caught are generally less than 14 inches long. All three species are managed collectively under the **Kingfishes Fishery Management Plan (FMP)**.

The Kingfishes have several regional names including sea mullet, king whiting, king croaker, sea mink, roundhead, hard head, whiting, hake, Carolina whiting, and Virginia Mullet.

Stock – Population of fish that live in same geographic area and mix enough to spawn when mature.

Stock Assessment - Biological and statistical information on a fish population to determine changes in stock abundance over time. Determines stock status.

Overfishing – Removing too many fish each year.

Overfished – Population is too small.

Fishery Management Plan (FMP) – Document that guides management of a fishery to ensure long-term sustainability.

- Management strategies and management measures enacted under an FMP are done through **Amendments**, **Supplements**, or **Revisions** dependent on the issue being addressed. Management can be implemented to address changes in stock status, new scientific information, or changing stakeholder needs.
- An **Information Update** incorporates changes in factual and background data that do not alter management strategies or management measures and does not introduce or address new management issues.

Management Strategy – Adopted to help reach the goal and objectives of the plan. They are the sum of all the management measures selected to achieve the biological, ecological, economic, and social objectives of the fishery.

Management Measure – The actions implemented to help control the fishery as stipulated in the management strategies.

Adaptive Management – A structured decision-making process when uncertainty exists, with the objective of reducing uncertainty through time with monitoring. Provides flexibility to incorporate new information and accommodate alternative and/or additional actions.

SCOPING DOCUMENT

The North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) wants your input on review of the Kingfishes FMP

PURPOSE OF SCOPING

The scheduled 5-year review of the Kingfishes FMP began in 2025. Upon reviewing internal and external data, the **DMF has not identified any concerning trends in the Kingfishes stock based on available information,** but acknowledges data are limited.

The scoping period provides the public with an opportunity to provide input about stock and fishery issues and the potential need for management changes.

This document provides background information about Kingfishes management and identifies potential issues and management strategies to be addressed. Scoping is the first and best opportunity to make suggestions about what management strategies should or should not be considered during review of the Kingfishes FMP.

Specific management options have not been developed. After reviewing public comments received during the scoping process, the DMF will recommend whether to pursue an **Information Update**, where no management changes are made, or an **Amendment**, where management changes are proposed for adoption by the Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC).

Questions about the Kingfishes fisheries and stock are provided at the end of this document for the public to consider; in general: “What do “viable” Kingfishes fisheries look like to you? What aspects of the Kingfishes fisheries are most important to you? Do you have concerns about the status of the Kingfishes stock? Would you make any changes to Kingfishes management?”

The suggested questions in this document are **NOT** intended to limit the scope of ideas or comments but may provide guidance to organize your thoughts. **The DMF wants to hear about your experiences in the Kingfishes fisheries and how YOU would approach management.**

WHAT IS SCOPING?

Scoping is the first stage of the FMP process. Scoping serves to:

1. Provide notice to the public that a formal review of the FMP is underway.
2. Inform the public of the stock status, when available.
3. Solicit input on relevant management strategies and issues to be addressed.
4. Recruit FMP Advisory Committee (AC) members to assist the DMF in drafting the plan.

SCOPING PERIOD

September 1, 2026 – September 30, 2026

SCOPING DOCUMENT

SCOPING MEETINGS

DMF will hold two scoping meetings (dates, times, and locations in table below), one of which will also provide the opportunity for online participation. At each scoping meeting, DMF staff will be available to provide information, answer questions, and solicit feedback about Kingfishes science, data collection, and management in North Carolina. There will be a presentation followed by a formal comment session. Following the comment session, DMF staff will be available for participants to further discuss issues and attendees are encouraged to communicate and share ideas with DMF staff.

Thursday September 3, 2026 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. DMF Central District Office 5285 Highway 70 West Morehead City, NC 28557 The meeting will also be streamed online A listening station will be available at the Manteo Field Office 1021 Driftwood Drive Manteo, NC 27954	**Thursday September 17, 2026** 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Wilmington Regional Office 127 Cardinal Drive Extension Wilmington, NC 28405

HOW TO COMMENT

During the comment period, the public may provide comments in person at the public scoping meetings or in writing. Written comments may also be submitted online or through U.S. Mail. All written comments must be received or postmarked by 11:59 pm on Wednesday September 30, 2026. You may submit written comments through one of the following methods:

1. Online at: Kingfishes Scoping Comments
2. U.S. Mail to:

N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries
Kingfishes Scoping
P.O. Box 769
Morehead City, N.C. 28557

All comments, regardless of submission method, will be considered by the DMF during FMP review.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

Kingfishes in North Carolina are managed under the Kingfishes Fishery Management Plan. The FMP developed management strategies to ensure long-term sustainable harvest for the recreational and commercial Kingfishes fisheries in North Carolina. The plan established the use of annual trend analysis and triggers to monitor the viability of the stock and identify potential management concerns. Results are presented to the MFC as part of the annual FMP Review. Activation of any two triggers two years in a row warrants further evaluation of the data and potential management action.

The FMP did not implement any management measures to directly limit the recreational or commercial harvest of Kingfishes. The only rule that directly refers to Kingfish is 15A NCAC 03J .0202(5) which states it shall be unlawful to possess finfish incidental to shrimp or crab trawl operations from December 1 through March 31 unless the weight of the combined catch of shrimp and crabs exceeds the weight of finfish, except an additional 300 pounds of Kingfish (*Menticirrhus* spp.) may be taken south of Bogue Inlet. Otherwise, **there are currently no size, bag, or trip limits for Kingfishes and there is no closed season.**

Information Updates to the FMP were completed in 2015 and 2020. In 2015, the best available data and techniques used for the trend analysis and triggers were refined and modified to better assess population trends. In 2020, the annual FMP Review served as the comprehensive 5-year FMP review.

STOCK STATUS

As part of this comprehensive FMP review, available data were explored to examine the possibility of conducting a stock assessment for the Kingfishes stock complex in N.C. waters. However, because the Kingfishes stock complex is transboundary and consists of multiple species with their own unique biological characteristics, the stock assessment was not successful and could not estimate **stock status** relative to whether the **stock** is **overfished** or **overfishing** is occurring.

However, to further investigate the relative health of the Kingfishes stock complex when they are in N.C. waters, recreational and commercial landings data, fishery-independent indices, and age and length composition data were explored. Upon reviewing the data, the DMF concluded:

- Data for Kingfishes are limited, but
- The available data is informative of the Kingfishes stock complex
- **There is no immediate concern for the Kingfishes stock complex**

Results of the data review and the scoping period will inform how the FMP review will proceed.

RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

Most recreational harvest of Kingfishes come from the nearshore ocean and anglers fishing from structures like piers, jetties, or bridges but also from surf fishing. A smaller number are captured from vessels in the ocean and in estuarine waters. Recreational harvest is seasonal with most fish harvested during the spring and fall, and the lowest harvest during the summer. Harvest was generally low in the 1980s but has been increasing since the early 2000s (Figure 1). Since 2009, recreational fisheries have harvested around 2.0 million pounds per year or more with some variability across years. Around 6.0 million pounds harvested in 2021 and over 3.0 million pounds harvested in 2022.

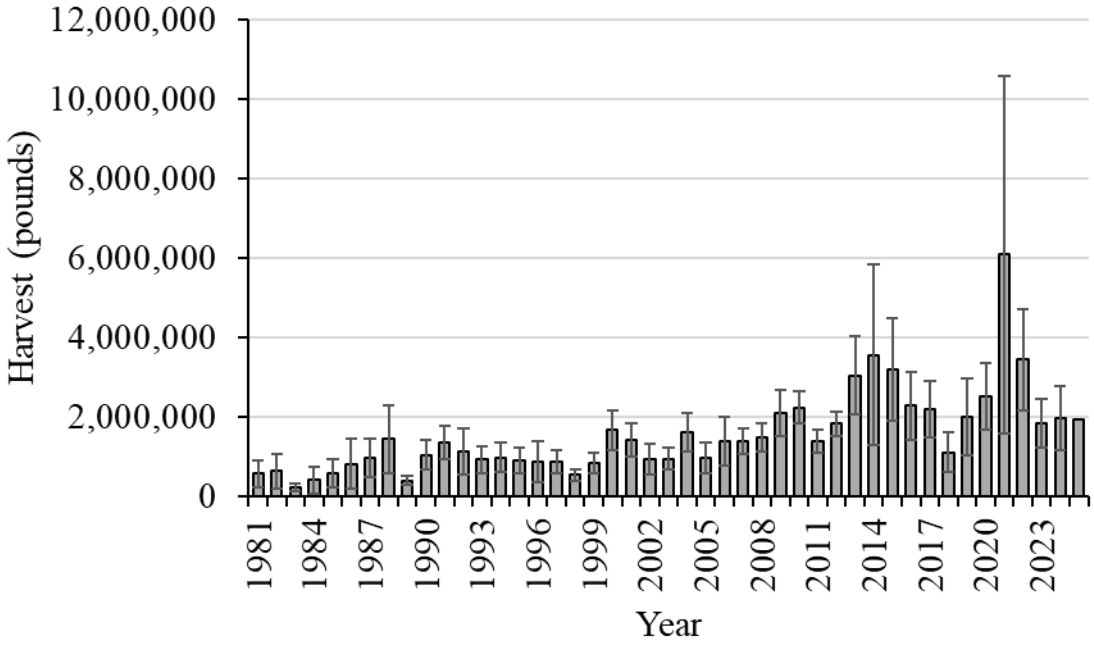


Figure 1. Estimated pounds of Kingfishes harvested in the North Carolina recreational fishery by year, 1981–2025. The lines through each bar indicate the 95% confidence interval for the harvest estimate. Data Source: Marine Recreational Information Program.

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

Most commercial landings occur south of Cape Hatteras in nearshore (less than three nautical miles) ocean waters. Kingfishes are predominantly landed in the spring and fall corresponding with seasonal inshore and offshore movement. Most commercial landings come from ocean gill nets with lesser amounts landed from trawls, estuarine gill nets, and long haul seines.

Commercial landings ranged from roughly 200,000 pounds to 1.2 million pounds per year from 1981 through 2025 (Figure 2). The number of commercial trips (Figure 3) landing Kingfishes and the number of participants (Figure 4) in the commercial Kingfishes fisheries have declined since 1994.

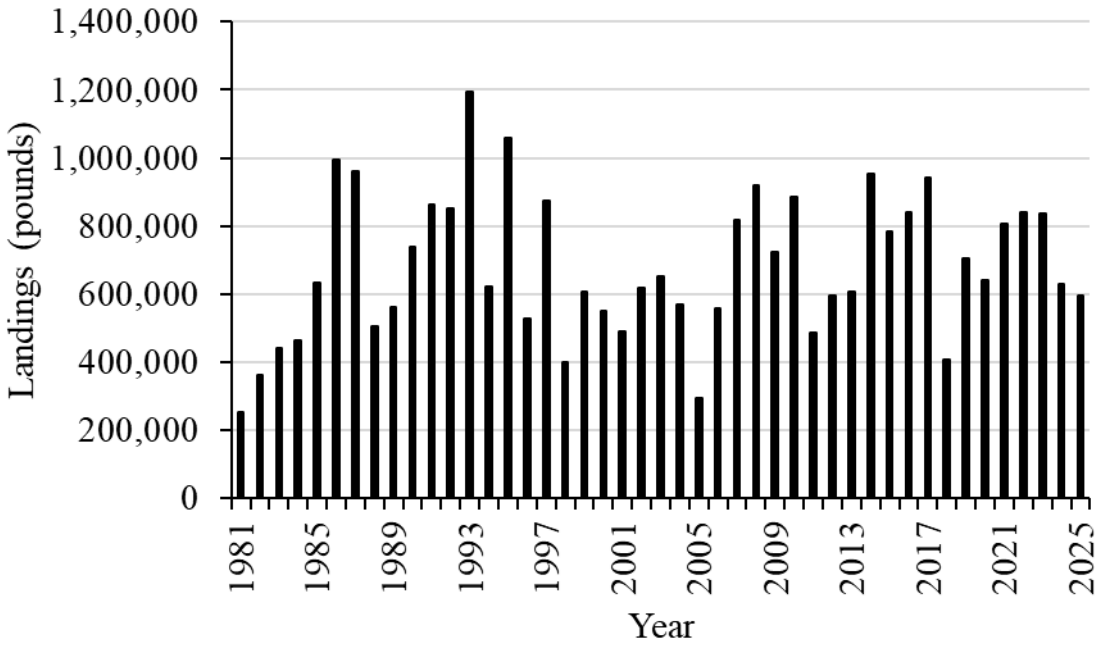


Figure 2. Pounds of Kingfishes harvested in the North Carolina commercial fishery by year, 1981–2025. Data Source: N.C. Trip Ticket Program.

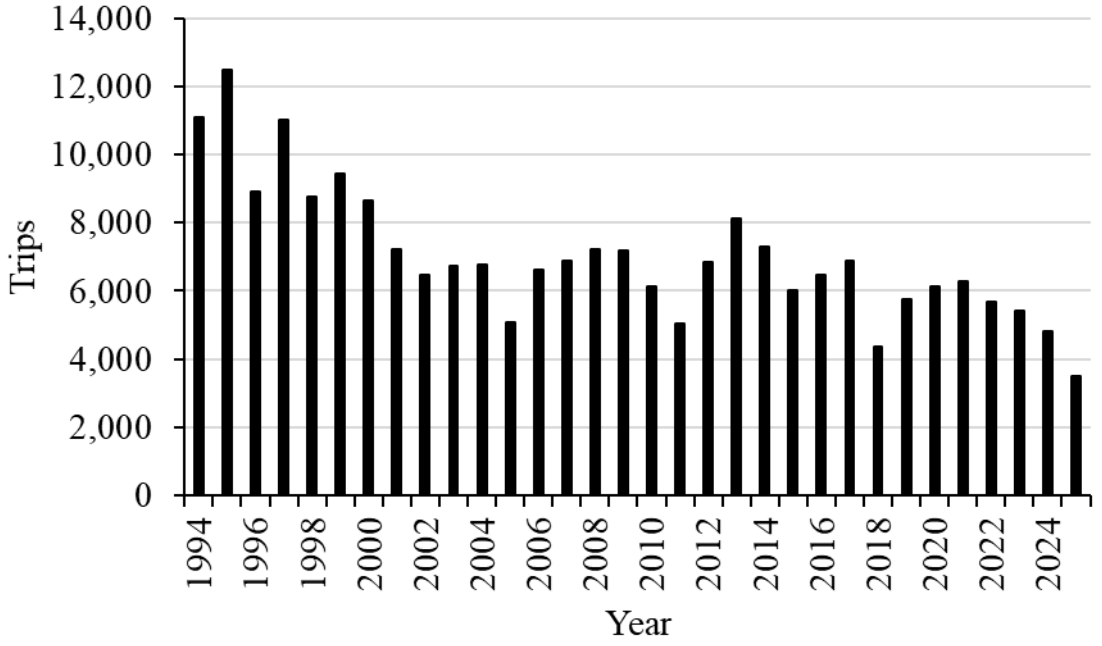


Figure 3. Number of commercial fishing trips landing Kingfishes in North Carolina by year, 1994–2025. Data Source: N.C. Trip Ticket Program.

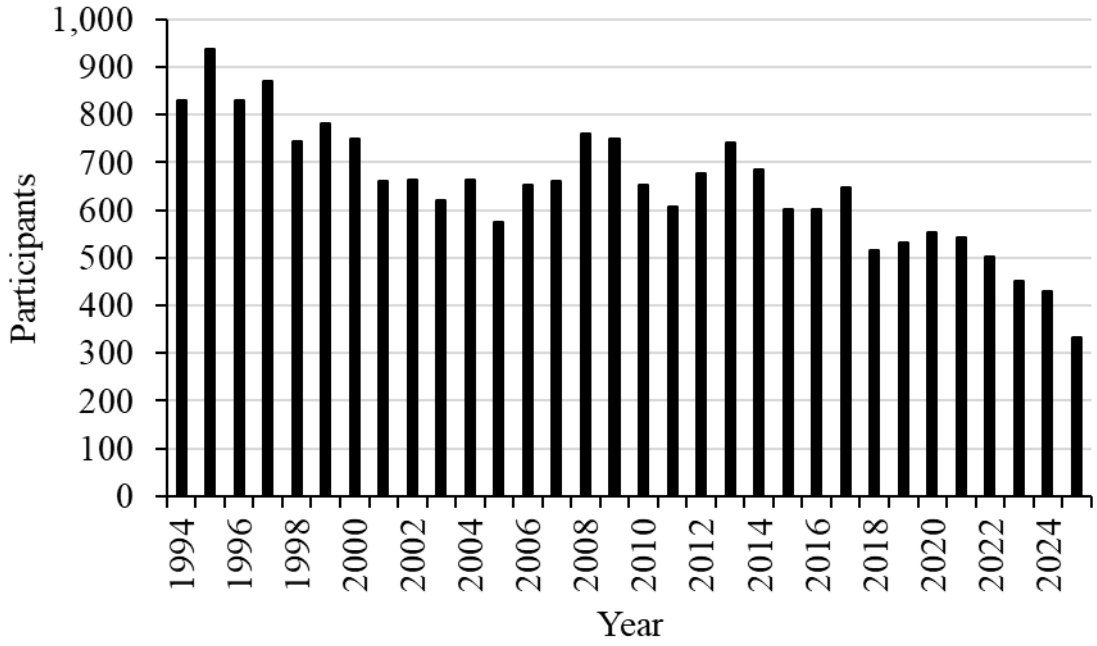


Figure 4. Number of commercial fishery participants reporting Kingfishes landings, 1994–2025. Data Source: N.C. Trip Ticket Program.

STRATEGIES FOR CONSIDERATION

The DMF is in the early exploratory stages of FMP development. **Specific management options have not been developed, and nothing has been proposed**. After reviewing public comments received during the scoping process, the DMF will recommend whether to pursue an **Information Update**, as was done in 2015 and 2020 when no management changes are made, or an **Amendment**, where management changes are proposed for adoption by the MFC.

Prior to determining how to proceed with the current FMP review, the DMF is looking for public input regarding perceptions of the Kingfishes stock and fisheries.

Proactive Management

While the DMF has not identified immediate concern for the Kingfishes stock complex based on available data, because there are no management measures in place to directly limit harvest of Kingfishes, shifts in effort that substantially increase harvest could cause concern. Proactive management that maintains the Kingfishes stock complex at the current level could be considered during this FMP review. This could involve adopting “guardrail” management based on current fishery characteristics and Kingfishes life history such as minimum size limits (consistent with the length at which Kingfishes are able to spawn), or bag/trip limits.

Monitoring Framework

The current framework monitors the Kingfishes stock complex annually using triggers. This framework is not specific as to what conditions or data trends might indicate the need for

additional management. In addition, review of the triggers in 2025 concluded most were set too conservatively, survey changes have limited their effectiveness, or survey changes have eliminated the ability to use specific triggers moving forward. **At a minimum this FMP review will update the current triggers through an Information Update to include the most informative data to represent the status of the Kingfishes stock complex,** like what was done in 2015.

The 2026 FMP review could re-evaluate the response to triggers being exceeded through an amendment. The response could be made prescriptive, where triggers being exceeded would result in specific management changes being implemented (e.g., size or bag limits, etc.).

Small Mesh Gill Nets

At their August 2021 business meeting, the MFC passed a motion to not initiate rulemaking on small mesh gill nets (< 5 inches stretched mesh) but refer the issue through the FMP process for each species. The DMF is interested in public input about fishing practices in the commercial gill net fishery and ideas about how to best manage the Kingfishes small mesh gill net fishery. The DMF is also interested in how implementation of potential management (e.g., minimum size limit, minimum mesh size, or trip limits) would impact fishing operations.

Questions for the Public

The questions below are provided for the public to consider when thinking about the Kingfishes fisheries; in general: “What aspects of the Kingfishes fisheries are most important to you? Would you make any changes to Kingfishes management to improve your experience in the fisheries?”

The suggested questions in this document are **NOT** intended to limit the scope of ideas or comments but may provide guidance to organize your thoughts.

- **What do “viable” Kingfishes fisheries mean to you?**
- **How do you view the future of the Kingfishes fisheries?**
- **As regulations have limited harvest of other fish, do you fish for Kingfishes more often?**
- **What aspects of the Kingfishes fisheries are important to you? For example, do you fish for Kingfishes because they are easily accessible? Do you fish for Kingfishes to keep a lot of fish? Do you prefer keeping larger Kingfishes or do you like keeping all sizes?**
- **How often do you fish for Kingfishes? Where, when, and how do you fish for Kingfishes?**
- **What time of year is targeting Kingfishes most important to you?**
- **In the recreational fishery, how often do you practice catch and release of Kingfishes? What size Kingfishes do you prefer to keep? Do you ever use Kingfishes as bait?**
- **In the commercial fishery, what challenges do you face to operate sustainably and effectively? Have your fishing methods changed to harvest Kingfishes? How have they changed?**