

WEEKLY UPDATE: 10/31/2014
NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES ASSOCIATION
"Serving the Commercial Fishing Families of North Carolina since 1952"
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COASTAL WATERS IN SOUTHERN AREA OF STATE REOPEN TO LARGE-MESH GILL NETS: Coastal waters in the southern area of the state will reopen to anchored, large-mesh gill nets Sunday afternoon. The reopening takes place at 4:12 p.m. and impacts waters between the N.C. 58 bridge to Emerald Isle and the South Carolina state line, which is Management Area E under the state's Sea Turtle Incidental Take Permit. See the [news release](#) for more information.

NOAA RELEASES 2013 FISHERIES OF THE US REPORT; SEAFOOD LANDINGS, REVENUE UP FROM 2012: In its annual report, [Fisheries of the United States 2013](#), NOAA Fisheries announced that U.S. fishermen landed 9.9 billion pounds of fish and shellfish, an increase of 245 million pounds from 2012. Valued at \$5.5 billion, these landings represent an increase of \$388 million from 2012. Visit [Saving Seafood](#) for more information.

FOR-HIRE LOGBOOK STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS: The Division of Marine Fisheries will hold a series of stakeholder meetings to provide information on a proposed for-hire logbook reporting requirement. For meeting dates and times see the [news release](#).

JERRY'S COMMENTS:

Lauren and I attended a public hearing this week at the Crystal Coast Civic Center in Morehead City. It was conducted by a House Select Committee on the Use of Off-Road Vehicles on Cape Lookout National Seashore. The meeting agenda consisted of taking public comment on the National Park Service's (NPS) Draft Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement that evaluates whether to allow ORV use at the Seashore.

One would assume that since this is a federal issue, the House Select Committee holding the hearing would be the US House, or members of Congress. However, that assumption would be incorrect! This House Select Committee was appointed by NC House Speaker Thom Tillis, and he appointed the following House members:

Rep. Pat McElraft, Chair
Rep. Chris Millis, Member
Rep. George Graham, Member

Rep. McElraft conducted the hearing with Rep. Millis in attendance, however Rep. Graham could not attend.

So here we have the state government taking comments on a federal issue. This Select Committee will, I'm sure, compile the comments in a document and forward them to the feds for their consideration. And I'm sure additional comments will be forthcoming from the members of the Committee and perhaps the North Carolina House on their opinions of the proposed actions.

It should also be noted here that Senator Norman Sanderson was in the audience and gave comments on the proposals, and Hugh Johnson, Policy Analyst for Governor McCrory, also attended.

Do you see the significance of this hearing? If not, you should! Kudos to Speaker Tillis for appointing this Committee and the Committee members AND STAFF for taking the time to come to the coast and hear the thoughts of citizens on this important issue!

I harken back a few years when I remember when we did this kind of thing when needed. When the federal government proposed an action or put some action in place that affected coastal North Carolina negatively and the state government would stand with us and actually do something about it! In most cases, about the only thing the state could do was make comments and try to exert some pressure on Congress or the federal fisheries bureaucrats. And while those comments may not have had any real legal effect, it made us all feel good and proud as North Carolina citizens that our State stood with us!

Heck, I remember the time in the 90s when Pres Pate was the Director of Marine Fisheries, that we actually held a joint press conference on state property at DMF's conference room, announcing that the State of North Carolina and the North Carolina Fisheries Association were suing the federal government over some fisheries rules! Yes, you're reading this correctly! NCFA and the State of North Carolina jointly sued the feds, and the press conference was held at DMF headquarters in Morehead City. The Attorney General's office worked with our attorneys. (Dan McLawhorn, now retired, was the lead attorney for the AG's office and was superb!)

And we won that lawsuit, by the way.

Oh my, has the climate changed. In my 25+ years of involvement with fisheries issues in North Carolina, I have never witnessed the contentiousness surrounding the management of fishermen and their ability to earn a living on the water. Who or what has changed? Certainly the attitudes of some in government from my perspective, but we have too. Blame it on the fishermen's back being in the corner, blame it on social media that seems to cause intelligent people to become imbeciles or whatever other excuse we want to come up with, but we have added to this poisoned well too. The State seems to care less about what commercial fishermen think and our rhetoric at times is over the top.

The attitudes on both sides, well, it just plain sucks. (Unprofessional language I know, but what else do you expect from a tobacco chewing, suspender wearing, lobbyist?)

I see this recent public hearing as a very positive sign that we can turn this around, but we need to talk. We need a Select Committee of calm heads from Raleigh and the coast to get together, eat some fish, shrimp and oysters and chat. We'll supply the food. We just need some interest.

God bless,
Jerry

p.s. I guess I should also address the election, so here's what I think: If you are involved with commercial fishing in any way and you don't vote, you're an idiot.

MEETINGS:

If you are aware of ANY meetings that should be of interest to commercial fishing that is not on this list, please contact us so we can include it here.

Nov. 3 - Oyster and Hard Clam Fishery Management Plan Advisory Committee Meeting - Washington

Nov. 4 - For-Hire Logbook Reporting Requirement Meeting - Wilmington

Nov. 6 - For-Hire Logbook Reporting Requirement Meeting - Morehead City

Nov. 12 - For-Hire Logbook Reporting Requirement Meeting - Manteo

Nov. 19-21 - Marine Fisheries Commission Meeting - Kitty Hawk

MFC/DMF MEETING SCHEDULE**PROCLAMATIONS:**

[SPINY DOGFISH-COMMERCIAL FISHING OPERATIONS](#)

[SPINY DOGFISH - DEALER PERMIT AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS](#)

[GILL NETS - ALBEMARLE SOUND AREA- MANAGEMENT UNIT A](#)

[RULE SUSPENSION-GILL NET RESTRICTIONS: INTERNAL COASTAL WATERS](#)

[HORSESHOE CRABS - COMMERCIAL FISHING OPERATIONS](#)

[CRAB TRAWLING AND TAKING SHRIMP WITH NETS](#)

[BLACK SEA BASS - COMMERCIAL FISHING OPERATIONS - ATLANTIC OCEAN- NORTH OF CAPE HATTERAS](#)

[RULE SUSPENSION - GILL NET RESTRICTIONS: INTERNAL COASTAL WATERS](#)

LARGE MESH GILL NETS PERMITS AND OBSERVERS:

Beginning on Monday, September 1, if you fish gill nets in internal waters, you need a permit. (Drift gill nets, strike, runaround or drop gill nets are exempt.) The permit wasn't the Division's idea, but came from commercial fishermen. It was thought that if one of the requirements for the federal ITP in the fishery is to have 7 percent of large mesh trips observed, then rather than have more restrictions, why not devise a permit to make sure we get enough coverage. Without the coverage, the feds can shut down the fishery, so a permit can keep that from happening. If a fisherman refuses to take an observer, he can lose his permit.

If you are fishing large mesh gill nets, don't wait to be called to take an observer. Call DMF and volunteer if you haven't taken an observer. Don't let it up to a few to take observers. If everyone does their part, the burden can be spread around a bit and you can do your part in keeping the fishery open.

One other point about fishing and turtles: If you have an interaction with a turtle while you're fishing and you don't have an observer, then call DMF and let them know. That's better for all of us. You won't get penalized for it and it's something that should be done.

POUND NETS:

Most fishermen check their pound nets daily for a number of reasons. One is the quality of the fish is better if fished frequently. NCFA encourages all pound net fishermen to check their nets daily, weather permitting. Fishermen should not be expected to risk their lives when checking their nets, but if the weather allows, we encourage you to check. It just makes sense, but most of you already know that.