

WEEKLY UPDATE: 3/21/2016
NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES ASSOCIATION
"Serving the Commercial Fishing Families of North Carolina since 1952"
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HEARINGS FOR BLUELINE TILEFISH:

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council is soliciting public input on a draft amendment to address management and conservation of blueline tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic. Four public hearings will be held between **March 21 and March 29, 2016**. Written comments will be accepted until **Wednesday, March 30, 2016**.

The draft amendment considers adding blueline tilefish (*Caulolatilus microps*) as a managed species in the Golden Tilefish Fishery Management Plan, effectively turning that plan into the Golden and Blueline Tilefish Fishery Management Plan. The management measures proposed in the amendment are needed to constrain fishing mortality on the blueline tilefish stock and effectively manage the blueline tilefish fishery in waters off the Mid-Atlantic and New England coasts.

Additional information and documents, including a public hearing document (to be posted by March 14), may be obtained from <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/blueline-tilefish>.

Members of the public are invited to comment on any aspect of the draft amendment. Following a review of comments received, the Council will choose preferred management measures and submit the Amendment to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and publication of proposed and final rules, both of which have additional comment periods.

For more information, contact Jason Didden at (302) 526-5254 or jdidden@mafmc.org.

Hearings for our area are listed below in the Calendar section.

SKIMMER TRAWLS:

Below is a notice from NMFS about potential new regs for skimmer trawls. If you own a skimmer trawl, please contact NCFA to let us know your thoughts on these proposed regulations. Contact David Bush at the number listed above or his cell: (910) 777-1605, or by email. This issue will be on the agenda at our next Board of Director's meeting on April 4th, so be sure to respond before then, or plan to attend the Board meeting.

NOAA Fisheries hosts public meetings in April to discuss potential skimmer trawl regulations in Southeast US

NOAA Fisheries is considering new regulations in the shrimp fishery of the southeastern United States based on information indicating sea turtles are vulnerable to capture by skimmer trawls and tow times may not be as effective in reducing bycatch-related mortality as turtle excluder devices. The agency will host five public meetings around the region to discuss and receive input from fishermen and other constituents on alternatives to reduce sea turtle bycatch and mortality.

These public meetings are the first stage in a multi-step process required by the National Environmental Policy Act to ensure that Federal agencies evaluate the environmental impacts of major Federal actions. During these meetings, the public is provided with an opportunity to assist us in determining the scope of issues that require analysis. The analysis of issues and the environmental impacts of the proposed actions will be presented in a draft Environmental Impact Statement, which will be made available for public comment. The notice of intent to prepare the draft statement will be published in the Federal Register on March 15, 2016.

Additionally, we prepared a scoping document and a list of frequently asked questions as aids to the public on the upcoming scoping process. These documents are available on the NOAA Fisheries website at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/protected_resources/index.html. The scoping document describes the major issues, current management and legal requirements, and identifies potential management measures to reduce interactions, and in particular, lethal interactions, between sea turtles and trawl fisheries.

There are several meetings being held but the North Carolina meeting is:

Morehead City, NC -- April 13, 2016, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m., Crystal Coast Civic Center.

Scoping comments may also be submitted during a concurrent 45-day comment period. When they publish the draft EIS, it will also have a 45-day public comment period.

SOUTHERN FLOUNDER:

Thanks to those of you who have contributed to our Southern Flounder Fund. Those funds will be used exclusively for issues related to southern flounder, either legally or other avenues to address the situation.

If you have not yet contributed, please do so ASAP!

Send your donations to:

NCFA

2807 Neuse Blvd; Suite 11

New Bern, NC 28562

Please make your check out to NCFA/Southern Flounder Fund or to the NC Fisheries Association and be sure to put Southern Flounder Fund in the memo.

God bless,
Jerry

CALENDAR

Mar 21; 6:00pm; Blueline tilefish; Dare County Admin Bldg; Manteo
Mar 22; 7:00pm; Blueline tilefish; Hilton Oceanfront; Virginia Beach
Apr 4; Noon; NCFA Board meeting; Civic Center; Washington NC
Apr 6; 5:30pm; MFC Southern Advisory Cmte; DMF office; Morehead City
Apr 7; 5:30pm; MFC Northern Advisory Cmte; DEQ office; Washington
Apr 11; 6:00pm; Oyster/Hard Clam Advisors; DMF office; Morehead City
Apr 12-14; MAFMC meeting in Montauk, NY
Apr 13; 2:00-4:00pm; Skimmer Trawl meeting; Civic Center; Morehead City
Apr 14; 6:00pm; Shellfish/Crustacean Advisors; DMF office; Morehead City
Apr 25; North Carolina General Assembly convenes for the Short Session
May 2-5; ASMFC Spring Meeting; Westin; Alexandria, VA
May 18-20; MFC meeting; Civic Center; Morehead City