

WEEKLY UPDATE: 5/23/2016
NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES ASSOCIATION
"Serving the Commercial Fishing Families of North Carolina since 1952"
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FROM THE CARTERET COUNTY FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION ON THE CCFA FISH FRY!

Thank you to everyone that came out to support our local fisherman on Saturday, May 21. Our Fish Fry was a great success! We could not have done it without the support of our sponsors, donors and volunteers!!! THANK YOU AGAIN!!!

Once again it's time for our monthly meeting!!

Saturday, May 28, 2016; 6:30pm
Marshallberg Community Club

We still have some C.C.F.A T-Shirts for sale at \$10. We did sell a lot at the Fish Fry, so if you haven't gotten yours yet contact me. We have youth small - 2 XL available, not many of each though.

I am still asking for you to renew your C.C.F.A membership if you haven't done so yet.

Aundrea O'Neal
C.C.F.A –Treasurer
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NCFA WORKING WITH NIXON FISHERY ON CATFISH ISSUES:

About 30 folks attended a blue catfish fish fry in Rocky Hock recently to discuss the issue of the federal inspection of catfish processors.

The rule placing inspection of catfish under USDA was added to the 2008 Farm Bill and was not well conceived. It was meant to provide an inspection process for farm raised catfish coming from China and Vietnam, but as written encompasses all catfish, including wild caught.

There are no health risk associated with catfish and to claim protection of public health is irresponsible. The FDA was required to inspect 100 % of all incoming Chinese catfish before this rule took effect. By moving this from FDA, which inspects all seafood in the US to the USDA which has no background or history with the seafood industry is a waste of resources.

The USDA has completely overlooked the wild domestic industry. The USDA still has no idea the size and scope of the domestic industry. Roughly 97% of domestic catfish are produced by 3 % of the companies that handle catfish, while 3% of the catfish produced in this country are produced by 97% of the companies which represent 1000s of small businesses and US jobs.

Efforts to fix this are taking place in the U.S. Senate, and Senators Burr and Tillis and their staffs have been helping us on it.

INVASIVE SPECIES; POSSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL NIGHTMARE:

In addition to the above, there are some potential environmental consequences, as blue catfish is an invasive species and at the top of the food chain in our waters. They are prolific spawners, they grow fast and eat everything, including other species that North Carolina has been managing. If processors cannot process, they won't buy. Fishermen will lost income and the already increasing environmental costs will skyrocket.

NCFA's Jerry Schill commented at the recent Marine Fisheries Commission encouraging the Commission and the Division to be proactive with this issue.

BLUE CATFISH MEETING IN ROCKY HOCK



Dr. David Green of NC State University



Rep. Bob Steinburg, Edenton



Charlton Godwin of Division of Marine Fisheries



Ricky Nixon & Joel Scott of Murray Nixon Fishery

MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION MOTIONS:

The MFC met last week and here are the motions that were passed:

COBIA:

Motion by Joe Shute to keep the 1-fish cobia bag limit with a Sept. 30 closure date and to readdress the issue at the August meeting. Second by Chuck Laughridge. Motion fails 2-4 with one abstention.

Motion by Chuck Laughridge to adopt the following recreational cobia management measures for the May 23-Sept. 30, 2016 season: private boats will be allowed to fish Monday, Wednesday and Saturday only; all other recreational fishing modes will be allowed to fish 7 days a week; bag limits will be 4-fish-per vessel for charter boats; 2-fish per vessel for private boats; and 1-fish per person for shore based fishing (including pier and surf fishing). This does not impact catch-and-release fishing. Seconded by Rick Smith. Motion passes 3-2 with two abstention.

Motion by Chuck Laughridge to include a 37-inch fork length minimum size limit on cobia to the previously adopted recreational cobia management measures at the May 19, 2016 commission meeting. Seconded by Rick Smith. Motion carries 5-0 with 2 abstentions.

BLUE CRAB:

Motion by Mike Wicker to eliminate the harvest of sponge crabs and immature V-apron hard crab females with a 5 percent tolerance for all crab harvest (excluding V-apron peelers). Seconded by Mark Gorges.

Substitute motion by Alison Willis to strike Mike Wicker's motion and adopt the Division of Marine Fisheries recommendation with below amendments. Seconded by Janet Rose. Motion passes 6-1.

- Add ~~two~~ one additional cull rings to crab pots, ~~one~~ of which must be located within one full mesh of the corner of the pot and within one full mesh of the bottom of the apron/stairs (divider) of the upper chamber of the pot.

- Eliminate the harvest of v-apron immature female hard crabs (excluding peeler crabs) and that v-apron immature hard crab females ~~be added to the current 10~~ in have a be included in the 5 percent culling tolerance (currently only includes sublegal male and immature female hard crabs).
- Prohibit ~~sponge crab harvest (all stages)~~ of dark sponge crabs (brown and black) from April 1 – April 30. Include dark sponge crabs in the ~~10~~ 5 percent cull tolerance.
- Lower cull tolerance to 5 percent for all crabs, except mature females.
- Prohibit crab harvest with dredges except incidental to lawful oyster dredging as outlined in North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03L .0203(a)(2).

Motion by Chuck Laughridge to adopt the Division of Marine Fisheries recommendation, as amended above. Second by Alison Willis. Motion passes 6-0 with one abstention.

Motion by Joe Shute to request that the Division of Marine Fisheries include crab pots in its blue crab sampling gear. Second by Janet Rose. Motion carries 6-0 with one abstention.

STRIPED BASS:

Motion by Rick Smith to direct division staff to meet with the Wildlife Resources Commission staff, and bring joint recommendations to the August meeting in regards to addressing problems with striped bass reproduction in the Neuse and Tar rivers. Also, direct staff to expedite analysis of fin clip data on fin chip samples currently possessed by the division. The division should also provide a method of determining whether or not the old strain of stripers still exist in the Neuse and Tar rivers. Seconded by Mike Wicker. Motion passes 5-1 with one abstention.

Motion by Chuck Laughridge to request the Conservation Fund Committee to meet within the next 30 days to consider providing funding for DNA testing of fin clips already taken from the Central Southern Management Area in 2016 of striped bass 24 inches and smaller. Seconded by Rick Smith. Motion passes 5-0 with two abstentions.

STOCK ASSESSMENTS:

Motion by Janet Rose to request that future Division of Marine Fisheries sampling for stock assessments include various gears used by commercial fishermen in various areas fished by all user groups. When possible, division staff should be encouraged to work hand-in-hand with both commercial and recreational user groups for portions of the sampling process. Seconded by Chuck Laughridge. Motion passes 7-0.

FALSE ALBACORE AND ATLANTIC BONITO:

Motion by Chuck Laughridge that the MFC, through both letter and email from the MFC chairman to the MAFMC chair and MAFMC members showing support for including little tunny (false albacore) and Atlantic bonito in the list of Eco-system Component Species. The MFC should also express support for Alternative 2B: Designate unmanaged forage species as Eco-system Component Species and implement an incidental possession limit with 1,700 pounds total cap and a 1,500 cap on individual species. Seconded by Joe Shute. Motion passes 5-0 with two abstentions.

JERRY'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY NEWS:

NET BAN; HB-1122; LIMIT MARINE NET FISHING:

I met with Rep. Billy Richardson, the only sponsor of the bill last week. He said he had no intention of pushing

the bill and would tell me if he decides otherwise. The bill is currently in the House Rules Committee, which met this evening, May 24th. However, the agenda items did not include the net ban bill.

HOUSE PASSES BUDGET; NOW IN THE SENATE:

The house passed its version of the budget last week and it's now in the Senate where there will significant changes made. The bill will then be hashed out between the Senate and House to reconcile their differences.

NCFA OFFERING EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP TO PROMOTE COLLABORATION: from David Bush

In order to assist folks in dealing with and understanding the processes of fisheries science and management, as well as to promote collaboration between commercial fishermen and recreational anglers, I am soliciting interest in an educational workshop to be put on by NCFA at no cost to those attending.

The workshop(s) will most likely be held late this summer and the specific details such as location, timeline and presenters will be determined based on the interest level of those who might participate. I imagine it to be possibly a one-day workshop, potentially held at multiple locations and dates, depending on interest. If you have been in the business for a while and feel you are sufficiently familiar, it might be of benefit to send one or two of your senior employees. A few of the general topics include the basics on gathering data, producing an assessment, the role of science in management, and developing regulations through the council and commission processes. This will be a great opportunity to better learn the process and learn from one another.

There are a few familiar faces in the science world that have already expressed interest, and I would expect that I would be able to get a few council or commission members to present as well.

Please contact me with your thoughts about suggested time frames and to provide contact information for you or anyone else from your organization that would like to attend.

David Bush: davidbush@ncfish.org or 910-777-1605

SOUTHERN FLOUNDER:

The clock is ticking and these expenses will only increase, so if you have not yet contributed to the Southern Flounder Fund, please consider doing so.

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.

June 1; 5:00pm; DMF JEA Advisory Group; Ag Extension; New Bern

June 6; Noon; NCFA Board of Directors; Civic Center; Washington, NC

June 13-17; SAFMC meeting; Cocoa Beach, FL

June 14-16; MAFMC meeting; Newark, DE