

WEEKLY UPDATE: 3/28/2016
NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES ASSOCIATION
"Serving the Commercial Fishing Families of North Carolina since 1952"
Phone: (252) 633-NCFA (6232)
www.ncfish.org
Jerry Schill, President: jerryschill@ncfish.org; ext. 100
David Bush, Fisheries Biologist: davidbush@ncfish.org; ext. 102
Peggy Page, Accounting: peggy@ncfish.org; ext. 103

CARTERET COUNTY FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION is meeting on Saturday, April 9th at 6:30pm in Marshallberg. The group will be planning their annual Fish Fry scheduled for May, among some other things.

SKIMMER TRAWLS:

Last week we listed information about potential new regs for skimmer trawls. **For those of you who use skimmer trawls, you will receive a mailing from us in the next couple of days about this issue.**

PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO READ IT!

After looking it over, contact us at the office or an NCFA Board member about your thoughts as we will be discussing the subject at our Board meeting next Monday in Washington. The list of Board members and their phone numbers is listed in the mailing. If you'd like to attend the Board meeting, feel free to do so and participate in the discussion. The meeting begins at noon at the Civic Center in Washington NC.

For more info, contact NCFA's biologist, David Bush: (910) 777-1605, or by email.

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.

**FROM THE DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES:
State seeking public comment on management options required to improve blue crab stock**

The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries is accepting public comment on management options for the blue crab fishery. The management measures are required under Amendment 2 to the N.C. Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan to improve the condition of the state's blue crab stock.

Division staff will discuss the possible management measures and receive public comment at the following upcoming advisory committee meetings:

Southern Regional Advisory Committee
April 6, 5:30 p.m.
DMF Central District Office; Morehead City

Northern Regional Advisory Committee
April 7, 5:30 p.m.
DEQ Washington Regional Office; 943 Washington Square Mall, Washington

Shellfish/Crustacean Advisory Committee
April 14, 6 p.m.
DMF Central District Office; Morehead City

Additionally, comments can be directed by phone to division biologists Jason Rock at 252-948-3874 or Corrin Flora at 252-264-3911, or by email to Jason.Rock@ncdenr.gov or Corrin.Flora@ncdenr.gov.

The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission is scheduled to consider management action at its May meeting. Possible management options include:

Increasing the minimum size limit for male and immature female crabs

- * Establishing a seasonal size limit on peeler crabs
- * Reducing the tolerance of sub-legal size blue crabs to a minimum of 5 percent and/or implementing gear modifications to reduce sublegal catch
- * Eliminating the harvest of v-apron immature hard crab females
- * Restricting the harvest of sponge crabs
- * Prohibiting all harvest of sponge crabs and/or requiring sponge crab excluders in pots in specific areas
- * Closing the crab spawning sanctuaries from Sept. 1 to Feb. 28 and possibly imposing further restriction
- * Expanding existing and/or designating new crab spawning sanctuaries
- * Closing the fishery by season and/or gear
- * Gear modifications in the crab trawl fishery

Management measures will be implemented by proclamation following the commission's May meeting.

Management action is required under Amendment 2 to the N.C. Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan, adopted by the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission in November 2013. Amendment 2 uses an adaptive management framework based on the condition of the Blue Crab Traffic Light, which requires annual evaluation of three indicators to determine if any change in management is warranted. The indicators are adult abundance, the abundance of juvenile crabs in the stock (recruit abundance), and production (which evaluates the reproductive potential or resilience of the stock).

The annual evaluation has been completed, and management thresholds have been exceeded, requiring management action.

For more information, go to <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/home> under "Hot Topics."

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.

CALENDAR

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 9; 6:30pm; Carteret County Fishermen's Association; Marshallberg

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 13; 5:30pm; Finfish Advisors; DEQ office; Washington

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