

Dale Petty, CEO, Surf or Sound Realty

North Carolina is in the South Atlantic Region

North Carolina is included in the South Atlantic Region by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The South Atlantic Region includes North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida's East Coast. Marine fishery policies for species managed in the South Atlantic Region more closely resemble those for the Gulf Coast Region, which includes Florida's West Coast, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. This is particularly true of Red Drum, Spotted Seatrout, and Summer Flounder, three of the five most targeted recreational species in North Carolina. Commercial and recreational landings of these species in states north of North Carolina are extremely small.

Stock Status of Important North Carolina Fisheries

There are 39 marine and estuarine fish stocks that are particularly important to North Carolina. NCDMF maintains a stock status report for those 39 stocks and updates it annually. In 2006, 18 stocks were listed as Viable or Recovering and 14 as species of Concern or Overfished. In 2011, 12 were listed as Viable or Recovering and 20 were listed as species of Concern or Depleted. Species that were "down listed" included Atlantic Croaker, King Mackerel, Atlantic Menhaden, Spot, and Spotted Seatrout. Spot and Spotted Seatrout are two of the five most targeted recreational species in North Carolina.

Current Status of NC's Five Most Targeted Recreational Species

- **Spotted Seatrout** – Have been overfished for the last 19 years. In Nov. 2011, the NCMFC adopted measures towards ending overfishing within 2 years as required by S.L. 2013. North Carolina supplies 70% of the commercially landed spotted seatrout in the U.S., while NC anglers keep less than 5% of the recreationally harvested spotted seatrout in the U.S.
- **Spot** - Down listed from Viable to a Species of Concern in 2006. Recreational and commercial landings decreased to historic lows in 2010.
- **Red Drum** – Listed as Recovering. However, in 2011 recreational landings fell to their lowest level since 2004. Although they are not supposed to be a commercially targeted species, the NCMFC increased the commercial by-catch allowance from 7 to 10 fish in April, 2010. North Carolina supplies 90% of the commercially landed red drum in the U.S., while NC anglers keep less than 2% of the recreationally harvested red drum in the U.S.
- **Southern Flounder** – Have been listed as depleted since 2002. The Stock Status report from 1999 states "Fishing pressure on stock is tremendous. Stock comprised primarily of young fish." Approximately 80% of NC's southern flounder fishery is allocated to commercial fishermen and just 20% to recreational fishermen.
- **Striped Bass** – The Albemarle Sound/Roanoke River stock is listed as Viable. However, despite relaxing recreational and commercial restrictions, the 275,000 lb. recreational quota has not been caught since 2000 and the 275,000 lb. commercial quota has not been caught since 2004. In fact, less than 50% of the recreational quota has been caught each of the last six years. Although they are not supposed to be a commercially targeted species, NCDMF just increased the commercial by-catch allowance from 10 fish to 15 fish on Jan. 26, 2012.

Availability of Gamefish species to NC Seafood Dealers, Markets, and Restaurants

There is a persistent false rumor regarding the Coastal Gamefish Bill that red drum, spotted seatrout, and striped bass would no longer be available to NC seafood dealers and markets or served in restaurants. That is entirely false. Wild striped bass from other states as well as other fish and seafood is already purchased by NC seafood dealers and sold to NC seafood markets and restaurants. Red drum have had gamefish protection in Louisiana for the last 24 years but has remained available in New Orleans restaurants. Louisiana seafood dealers purchase wild red drum from other states or purchase U.S. farm-raised red drum. Eckstrom Enterprises in Texas is the largest producer of farm-raised red drum and hybrid striped bass in the U.S. They harvest 3,000,000 pounds of hybrid striped bass and 2,000,000 pounds of red drum annually (there are 3 other red drum aquaculture operations within 50 miles of Eckstrom). Even more impressive is the 5,000,000 lbs. of fish they harvest each year (hybrid striped bass and red drum combined) is produced in 1,000 acres of ponds. That is approximately 8 times more hybrid striped bass and 8 times more red drum than annual commercial landings of wild striped bass and red drum from North Carolina's estuarine and ocean waters combined (about 3,000,000 acres). Domestic farm-raised fish are free of hormones, antibiotics, and natural pollutants such as mercury and dioxins. They are harvested fresh daily to fill orders from fish dealers who receive them the next day. Unlike foreign aquaculture operations, U.S. aquaculture is regulated by the USDA, FDA, EPA, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Domestic aquaculture is a very profitable and completely sustainable industry. North Carolina already has a significant hybrid striped bass aquaculture industry. In 2009, twelve NC producers harvested 2,400,000 lbs. of hybrid striped bass from just 763 pond acres versus 310,604 lbs. of commercially landed wild striped bass from all of NC's coastal waters that same year. North Carolina has the potential to be one of the largest producers of healthy and sustainable farm-raised seafood in the nation. **Red drum, spotted seatrout, and striped bass will continue to be available in NC seafood markets and restaurants after they are designated gamefish.**

State	Estuarine Gill Net Regulations						Estuarine Trawling Regulations	
	Large Mesh			Small Mesh			Legal	Net Size Limit
	Legal	Yardage Limit	Attendance Required	Legal	Yardage Limit	Attendance Required		
North Carolina	YES	3,000 yards (9,000 ft)	NO	YES	NO Except By Proclamation	YES May 1-Nov 30 NO Dec 1-Apr 30	YES	NO
South Carolina	NO	N/A	N/A	YES	100 yds Allowed Only In Little River Inlet	YES	NO	N/A
Georgia	YES for Shad Only Jan 1-Mar 31	1,000 ft	NO	NO	N/A	N/A	NO	N/A
Florida	NO	N/A	N/A	NO	N/A	N/A	NO	N/A
Alabama	NO	N/A	N/A	YES For Roe Mullet Oct 24-Dec 31	NO	YES	YES	YES 50 ft At Top Line
Mississippi	NO	N/A	N/A	YES	400 yds (1,200 ft)	YES	NO	N/A
Louisiana	NO	N/A	N/A	NO	N/A	N/A	YES	YES 50 ft At Top Line
Texas	NO	N/A	N/A	NO	N/A	N/A	YES	YES 95 ft Total Width

State	Red Drum		Spotted Seatrout		Striped Bass **	
	Commercial Fishing/ Harvest Allowed	Avg Commercial Landings 2006-2010	Commercial Fishing/ Harvest Allowed	Avg Commercial Landings 2006-2010	Commercial Fishing/ Harvest Allowed	Avg Commercial Landings 2006-2010
North Carolina *	YES	214,996 lbs/year	YES	302,866 lbs/year	YES	408,344 lbs/year
South Carolina	NO	N/A	NO	N/A	NO	N/A
Georgia	YES, 5/day, Hook & Line Only	0	YES, 15/day, Hook & Line Only	0	N/A	N/A
Florida	NO	N/A	YES, 75/day, Hook & Line Only	47,949 lbs/year	N/A	N/A
Alabama	NO	N/A	NO	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mississippi	YES	28,267 lbs/year	YES	35,837 lbs/year	N/A	N/A
Louisiana	NO	N/A	YES, 25/day, Hook & Line Only	5,142 lbs/year 999 lbs in 2009 0 lbs in 2010	N/A	N/A
Texas	NO	N/A	NO	N/A	N/A	N/A

* North Carolina is considered to be in the South Atlantic Region by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) with South Carolina, Georgia and Florida's East Coast.

** Striped Bass have gamefish designation in 6 of the 13 states within their Atlantic range (Maine to South Carolina) including Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and South Carolina.