



HOUSE BILL 442: Restore Flounder/Red Snapper Season.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Committee:	Senate Agriculture, Energy, and Environment.	Date:	June 17, 2025
	If favorable, re-refer to Rules and Operations of the Senate		
Introduced by:	Reps. Iler, Goodwin, Davis	Prepared by:	Aaron McGlothlin
Analysis of:	Third Edition		Committee Counsel

OVERVIEW: House Bill 442 would direct the Fisheries Director, Marine Fisheries Commission, and the Division of Marine Fisheries to do all of the following: (i) open the southern flounder fishery for recreational fishing at least six weeks each year; (ii) set a commercial quota for southern flounder harvest at 750,000 lbs. each year; (iii) open a year-round red snapper season; (iv) conduct a southern flounder stock assessment; and (v) submit annual progress reports to the General Assembly.

This act would expire on August 1, 2029.

CURRENT LAW / BACKGROUND: The marine fisheries resources of the State are largely managed through the Fishery Management Plan Process. The North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (Division) prepares proposed Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for adoption by the Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) for all commercially or recreationally significant species or fisheries. The goal of the FMPs is to ensure the long-term viability of the State's commercially and recreationally significant species or fisheries. The Commission may delegate to the Fisheries Director the authority to issue proclamations suspending or implementing, in whole or in part, particular rules of the Commission that may be affected by variable conditions.

BILL ANALYSIS:

Section 1 of the bill would direct the Fisheries Director, the Commission, and the Division to do all of the following:

- Issue proclamations and undertake a supplement to the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan that: (i) allows a recreational harvest season of not less than six weeks between May 15 and November 15, with a daily creel limit of one fish per person and no seasonal limit; and (ii) sets a commercial quota with a total allowed catch of 750,000 pounds, with quota overages in one year deducted from the following year's quota. Any unused quota in one year would be added to the following year's quota. All other size and manner of take limits, season opening dates, area designations, and specific area and gear sub-allocations implemented through Amendment 3 to the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan would continue to apply.
- Allow a year-round red snapper season with a daily limit of two fish per person and a 20-inch minimum size limit in State waters.
- By July 1, 2026, complete a southern flounder stock assessment based on the most recent years of available data.

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Section 2 of the bill would require the Division to report the results of the southern flounder stock assessment no later than August 1, 2026 to the House Wildlife Resources Committee and the Senate Agriculture, Energy, and Environment Committee, and to submit annual reports each year thereafter assessing efforts to rebuild southern flounder stock and estimating a timeframe for increasing recreational and commercial access to southern flounder.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This bill would become effective upon becoming law, and would expire August 1, 2029.