



As publisher of **Coastal Carolina Fisherman** online magazine, I have been asked by many of our viewers to reach out to our North Carolina State legislature to ask you your position on the following controversial issues that are impacting our state's coastal fishing resource. This request is driven by concerns that the North Carolina recreational and commercial fishery is rapidly approaching a total demise based on the path of the last 20 years and continues still today. It's a decline of over 80% among multiple fish species along our coast. These fisheries are protected by the actions of the NC Division of Marine Fisheries and ultimately the State of North Carolina Legislature.

Your response will be available to the over 20,000 monthly visitors to the **Coastal Carolina Fisherman** website. The results will also be posted on over 40 social media sites and sent to multiple news outlets. It is our commitment to provide a clear, concise and most of all honest picture of the position of our elected officials on this important issue.

Over the past several years North Carolina's recreational and commercial fishermen have watched as a portion of the saltwater fishing resource has experienced a significant decline. There are many schools of thought on the issue. The biggest dispute lies between the state's commercial and recreational fishermen as to the real cause of this damaging and growing problem. Each party blaming the other with the commercial seafood industry supporting and funding the state's commercial fishing industries stand.

While the issues lie on numerous levels, the largest damage today and over recent years lies in 3 areas:

- The trawling of commercial fishing in the estuaries, sounds and rivers of our state. This is found, but not limited to the following areas of North Carolina:
 - Pamlico Sound
 - Albemarle Sound
 - Neuse River
 - Cape Fear River
 - New River

This trawling activity is commonly focused on the recovery of shrimp for commercial sale. The practice utilizes the use of dragging the live bottom, driving the shrimp into the nets that follow. This live bottom also serves as the breeding ground for juvenile fish species. The dragging process disrupts and destroys this precious bottom and serves to kill the juvenile fish before being able to move to deeper water and a more secure habitat.

- Then there is the improper use of gill-nets. This is commonly caused by persons that have obtained a commercial fishing license that permits the use of gill-nets. Severe damage to our fishery is caused when these persons use the nets to catch fish for their personal use only. This netting process not only severely impacts the targeted species, but other bi-catches as well.

- The final issue lies within the management of the state's coastal fishery, the North Carolina Division of Marine Fishery. Over the past 2 decades North Carolina has seen a significant decline in numerous species of saltwater fish. The North Carolina Wildlife Federation reports that catches of Southern Flounder has dropped 88%, Bluefish 78%, Spot 94% and Atlantic Croaker 85%. These are all important species to the fishery food chain as well as commercial and recreational fishing industries. While other states have implemented regulations that make inshore trawlers unlawful, North Carolina has not. The same is true with the use of gill-nets.

Respectfully

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Publisher

Coastal Carolina Fisherman Magazine

