

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER: 5/31/2019
NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES ASSOCIATION
"Serving the Commercial Fishing Families of North Carolina since 1952"
PO Box 86; Morehead City, NC 28557
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From Our Executive Director- Glenn Skinner

Everyone in NC that has an interest in the Southern Flounder fishery (Restaurant, Consumer, Commercial or Recreational) is encouraged to attend the meetings that are scheduled for next week.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

The main activity this week was in the Senate as they continue their work on the budget. The House has approved their version and as I write this late Thursday afternoon, they are still offering amendments on the Senate floor.

The budget is where one needs to be vigilant as things can get slipped in with little or no notice. Pam & I went to Maryland last weekend for our two Great-Grandsons' birthday party, and we returned on Sunday afternoon. Shortly after we returned, I got a text from Senator Norman Sanderson. He asked if I knew about a proposed provision in one of the Senate Appropriation Committees that provides for a voluntary buyout of unused commercial fishing licenses. I was not aware of the provision as it wasn't made public yet. I attended the Tuesday afternoon committee meeting and saw the language for the first time. It provided up to one million dollars per year to be used by DMF to buyback unused licenses on a voluntary basis, with the money coming from the Commercial Fishing Fund! That fund was set up by the General Assembly at our request to fund the observer program when the license fees were increased. Any monies not used for the observer program are to be spent on projects approved by the Funding Committee which is made up of 6 members representing 6 commercial fishing organizations. They are to work with the Marine Fisheries Commission's commercial fishing members to approve those projects.

On Tuesday night I sent a note to all 50 Senators about how bad that provision was and gave them a little history about the increased licensed fees, the observer program and the bill that was passed in 2014. Without going into all the gory details, there was a substantial amount of time working with Senate staff and Senators to come up with alternative language. NCFCA has never been in favor of any buyback proposal and still doesn't but the goal here was to keep the provision as doing no harm to the industry. The funding source was changed to the Shallow Draft Navigation Channel Dredging and Aquatic Weed Fund, and any licenses that were bought back shall revert to the pool of available commercial fishing licenses.

The amendment to change the language was offered by Senator Norman Sanderson on the Senate floor Thursday afternoon and passed 48-0. No harm to commercial fishermen but it took a lot of time to change it. Again, NCFCA does not support any buyback

program but we needed to provide language that would do no harm.

Please advise if you would like us to email you a copy of the amendment offered by Senator Sanderson.

Note below that S-648 was moved from Rules to Regulatory Reform and it's scheduled to be heard on Tuesday at noon in room 1228/1327 in the Legislative Building.

Jerry

H-169, the bill to make the Loggerhead Sea Turtle the state reptile passed the House and in Senate Rules. No action in the Senate this week.

H-483: LET THEM SPAWN

Voted favorably 11-3 in Wildlife Resources on April 16; now in Rules. Should be dead as it did not make it through the House before crossover. But this is the Easter season, so we'll be vigilant. No action this week.

NCFCA OPPOSES H-483

H-486 COMMERCIAL FISHING LICENSE REFORMS

Voted favorably 6-4 in Wildlife Resources on April 16; now in Finance.

This is similar to a bill filed last year, but it died in committee. This bill would eliminate the RCGL or recreational commercial gear license, would only allow one standard commercial license per person with person including corporation; doubles the license fees. We understand it was discussed in Republican caucus but unsure of status. No action this week.

NCFCA OPPOSES H-486

S-517: PROTECT THE MILITARY/FISHERIES/TOURISM; by Senator Peterson

In Senate Rules. No action this week.

Would prohibit offshore drilling. Same as H-545 below.

S-554: MARINE FISHERIES REFORMS; by Senators Sanderson, Brown, Tillman and Steinburg

Passed on the Senate floor on May 7th, 46 to 1.

Now in the House Rules Committee. No action this week.

S-648: SUPPORT SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE; by Senators Sanderson, Rabon and Steinburg

Passed on the Senate floor on May 7th, 47 to 0.

Taken out of House Rules and re-referred to the House Regulatory

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Reform Committee on May 30th. The bill is scheduled to be heard next Tuesday at noon in the Legislative Building; Room 1228/1327.

H-545: PROTECT THE MILITARY/FISHERIES/TOURISM; by Rep. Harrison, Martin, Russell and others

No action this week: In the House Rules Committee. Same as S-517 above.

H-598: BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN AS STATE MARINE MAMMAL by Reps Hanig, Grange and others.

Passed the House and sent to the Senate.

In the Senate Rules Committee. No action in the Senate this week.

H-597: WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION AMENDS; sponsored by Adams, Henson, Wray, Yarborough and others.

Substantially raises license fees and makes changes in proclamation authority.

Passed the House Wildlife Resources Committee; Although given a favorable report by the Finance Committee on May 15th, there were concerns noted from some legislators. It is now in Rules and perhaps more discussions there.

H-809: SUPPORT SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE; McElraft, Yarborough, Shepard, Harrison and others.

Similar to S-648 mentioned above. In House Environment Committee.

Since S-648 passed the Senate and now in the House, no action will be taken on this bill.

H-810: MARINE FISHERIES REFORMS; Yarborough

Similar in name to S-554 and H-860 but NOT the same in content!

In House Rules Committee. No action this week.

NCFA opposes H-810.

H-860: MARINE FISHERIES REFORMS: Cleveland, McElraft, Butler

Similar to S-554.

In House Rules Committee.

Since S-554 passed the Senate and now in House, no action will be taken on this bill.

H-479: ERC STUDIES/SCOPE: Dixon

Provides legislative oversight of marine fisheries issues by the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources.

Passed the House and sent to the Senate.

In Senate Rules. No action this week.

THIRD DISTRICT CONGRESSIONAL RACE

The two top vote getters from the Republican Primary will be in a runoff on July 9th. They are Greg Murphy from Greenville and Joan Perry from Kinston.

Joan Perry attended the May meeting of the God and Country Christian Alliance in New Bern. She spoke for a while and then answered questions for about 45 minutes.

Greg Murphy will be at the group's June 17th meeting using the same format. The meeting is open for all so a good opportunity to meet the candidate and see where he stands on the issues. The meeting begins at 7:00pm at Moore's Old Tyme BBQ on Hwy 17 South in New Bern. No charge to attend unless you eat. Those who want to eat first are encouraged to arrive between 6:00 and 6:30. The two candidates will participate in a debate in early July in Greenville. More details as we get them.

Calendar

Finfish, Northern, and Southern Advisory Committees Joint Meeting

Monday, June 3
12:00pm – 4:15pm
Crystal Coast Civic Center
3505 Arendell Street,
Morehead City, NC

Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Advisory Committee

Monday, June 3
6:00pm – Until
5285 Hwy 70 W,
Morehead City, NC

Marine Fisheries Commission to Meet to discuss Southern Flounder

Thursday, June 6
1:00pm – Until
Beaufort Hotel
2440 Lennoxville Rd,
Beaufort, NC

NCFA Board Meeting

Monday, June 10
11 am-Until
2090 W. 15th Street
Washington, NC