

**WEEKLY NEWSLETTER: 11/22/2019**  
**NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES ASSOCIATION**  
**"Serving the Commercial Fishing Families of North Carolina since 1952"**  
**PO Box 86; Morehead City, NC 28557**  
**Phone: (252) 726-NCFA (6232) Fax: (252) 726-6200**  
[www.ncfish.org](http://www.ncfish.org)

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The General Assembly adjourned on Friday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, until January 14, 2020. Last week they approved a Hurricane Dorian relief package and adopted new Congressional maps that will now be scrutinized by the courts.

**CONGRESS**

***OVERSIGHT HEARING:***

<https://naturalresources.house.gov/hearings/wow-oversight-hearing-november-14-2019>

On Thursday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, there was an oversight hearing in the Subcommittee of Water, Oceans and Wildlife (under the House Natural Resources Committee) concerning NOAA's Report on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. The link for the hearing video is above. It's an hour and 40 minutes long. It's not easy sitting in front of a computer screen that long, but it is extremely interesting and belies the title. There are 5 witnesses that offered testimony and answered questions. The topic of the hearing is listed above (IUU fishing), and the subject matter of the witnesses ranged from the obvious, that is, illegal fishing, to human trafficking, slavery, forced child labor and the illegal dumping of shrimp into the US. This hearing is about foreign fishing, not domestic. It is very, very interesting. Those that have been highly critical of our own US and North Carolina fishermen will be highly disappointed as the Committee members make the statements that the American fishing industry is the hero, and our fishermen are "blameless and exemplary". One of the witnesses is Nathan Rickard, who is the trade attorney for the Southern Shrimp Alliance. Nathan did an excellent job with his

testimony, giving the history of SSA in the shrimp industry. Shrimpers in our state are very familiar with the great work SSA has done for the southeast shrimpers in dealing with the illegal dumping of shrimp into the US. His testimony includes the health issues surrounding some of the imported shrimp and how countries get around the laws that are supposed to keep it out. Currently Nancy Edens and Brent Fulcher represent North Carolina on the SSA Board, and John Williams is the Executive Director.

So, this hearing was on Thursday, November 14<sup>th</sup>. The Honorables noted that US fishermen are the good guys, the "hero", "blameless and exemplary". So just 6 days later, on Wednesday evening about 5:00pm, that same group pass HR 737, which penalizes US fishermen for something that's going on outside of the US, and that is shark finning. See below for that synopsis.

***HR 737: TO PROHIBIT THE SALE OF SHARK FINS AND OTHER PURPOSES:***

On Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, the US House passed this bill which NCFA, as part of the Sustainable Shark Alliance, opposed. The vote was 310 – 107, with North Carolina's delegation voting 6 in favor and 7 against. All 3 NC Democrats voted for the bill joined by 3 Republicans.

We are appreciative of those NC Representatives voting NO: George Holding, Greg Murphy, Virginia Foxx, Mark Walker, David Rouzer, Dan Bishop, and Mark Meadows. Special thanks to Greg Murphy for personally reaching out about this bill as well as Ian Whitson of Congressman Rouzer's staff. We now need to concentrate on the Senate side.

**MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION MEETING**

***MID ATLANTIC COUNCIL NOMINEES:***

The Commission approved the following nominations to the obligatory seat on the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council: Dewey Hemilright, Brent Fulcher and Robert Ruhle. Dewey is the incumbent. This slate of nominees goes to Governor Roy Cooper who will then make his decision and forward to the US Secretary of Commerce who makes the appointment. Council appointments are for 3 years and usually announced in June. NCFA recommended the MFC to approve the slate and list Dewey as the preferred nominee.

***DELINEATION OF FISHING WATERS:***

The MFC and Wildlife Resources Commission met a few times to discuss the reclassification of jurisdictional waters. DMF staff has recommended no changes but the WRC wants to push it ahead on their own.

During public comment on Thursday morning, Coastal Resources Commission Chairman, Renee Cahoon, spoke in opposition to changing the lines for coastal waters, as did NCFA's Jerry Schill.

Commissioner Doug Cross made a motion that the Marine Fisheries Commission reject the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission recommendation of a 2.6 parts per thousand delineation line as it pertains to a boundary for inland and coastal waters and that we recommend staying at status quo on our current guidelines that we are at that our rules are already in place for. Chairman Rob Bizzell called the motion out of order.

**WEEKLY NEWSLETTER: 11/22/2019**  
**NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES ASSOCIATION**  
**"Serving the Commercial Fishing Families of North Carolina since 1952"**  
**PO Box 86; Morehead City, NC 28557**  
**Phone: (252) 726-NCFA (6232) Fax: (252) 726-6200**  
[www.ncfish.org](http://www.ncfish.org)

Commissioner Martin Posey made a motion as follows: that the Marine Fisheries Commission supports continuation of the joint discussion process as represented by the Wildlife Resources Commission/Marine Fisheries Commission Joint Committee on Delineation of Fishing Waters. These commissions should seek input from other impacted units including the Coastal Resources Commission, the Environmental Management Commission, as well as support from staff. Motion to amend seconded by Pete Kornegay.  
Motion carries with two abstentions.

**BLUE CRAB:**

Marine Fisheries Commission moves forward with blue crab management measures.

*MOREHEAD CITY* – The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission is moving forward with management measures for the blue crab fishery designed to end overfishing and achieve sustainable harvest.

The commission last week selected management measures for the draft Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan Amendment 3. The draft amendment will now be sent for departmental review.

Selected management measures would:

- Implement a closed season (which will replace the current pot closure period)
  - ¾ Jan. 1-31 north of the Highway 58 bridge to Emerald Isle
  - ¾ March 1-15 south of the Highway 58 bridge;
- Implement a 6.75-inch size limit for mature female crabs north of the Highway 58 bridge;
- Prohibit the harvest of immature female hard crabs statewide;

- Retain the current 5% cull tolerance;
  - Retain the current cull ring number and placement requirements;
  - Remove all cull ring exempted areas;
  - Expand the existing spawning sanctuaries in Drum Inlet and Barden Inlet;
  - Establish new spawning sanctuaries in Beaufort, Bogue, Bear, Browns, New River, Topsail, Rich, Mason, Masonboro, Carolina Beach, Cape Fear River, Shallotte, Lockwood Folly and Tubbs inlets with a March 1-Oct. 31 closure;
  - Prohibit crab dredges;
  - Prohibit crab trawls in areas where shrimp trawls are already prohibited in the Pamlico, Pungo, and Neuse rivers;
  - Reduce the crab bycatch allowance for oyster dredges to 10% of the total weight of the combined oyster and crab catch or 100 pounds, whichever is less;
  - Develop a specific crab pot funnel design to reduce diamondback terrapin interactions and identify individual areas with terrapin hotspots where use of the terrapin excluder device will be required;
  - Work with other commissions and state agencies to address water quality issues affecting blue crab.
- Reductions in harvest are necessary because a recent North Carolina stock assessment for blue crab determined the stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring. Overfished means the population is too small. Overfishing means the removal rate is too high. North Carolina law mandates that fishery management plans include measures to end overfishing within two years of adoption and rebuild the stock to achieve sustainable harvest within 10 years of adoption. The options addressing sustainable harvest

are predicted to reduce harvest by 3.1% meeting the mandated reductions.

The Marine Fisheries Commission is scheduled to consider final adoption of the draft Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan Amendment 3 in February 2020. Approved management measures will be implemented shortly afterward by proclamation.

NOTE: If you have opinions on this or any other action by the MFC, don't just spout off on social media or to your friends, but correspond with the Marine Fisheries Commission. Call or email the NCFCA office if you need contact information.

Please note the date for the next MFC meeting is early February, so send your comments asap.

**RESOLUTION TO COMBINE THE MARINE FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES:**

A resolution was recently adopted by the NC Wildlife Federation to consolidate the Division of Marine Fisheries into the Wildlife Resources Commission.

This would take action by the North Carolina General Assembly and signed by the Governor.