

NCFA UPDATE:02/10/2025  
NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES ASSOCIATION  
"Serving the Commercial Fishing Families of North Carolina since 1952"  
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## Six Fisheries on the Chopping Block at Upcoming MFC Meeting

The North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) meets February 19th-21st to discuss and vote on cutting harvest, time closures, closing large areas, and even eliminating usable gears in six vital NC fisheries. Blue crab, false albacore, flounder, speckled trout, oysters, and clams. As there are so many issues being brought forward at this one meeting, I will try to give a quick overview of each species on the agenda and follow up with additional updates with more detailed information about each issue before the meeting.

[Meeting Webpage](#)

### **False Albacore**

The MFC will vote on final adoption of the False Albacore Management rule before being sent to the Rules Review Commission. This "rule" does nothing to conserve or sustain the false albacore fishery. The only thing this rule would accomplish is setting recreational trip limits to a range of zero to 10 fish per day and commercial trip limit range of 0-3500 pounds per day if we reach a combined overall harvest threshold.

With no regard to any of the traditional metrics used to determine the health of a fishery, abundance, recruits, fishing effort, etc. etc. Why would we subject ourselves to a wide range of allowable harvest limits without any of the necessary data? This "rule" is arbitrary at best.

[False Albacore Rule](#)

### **Southern Flounder**

The MFC will vote on approval of draft Amendment 4 for public and Advisory Committee (AC) review. Draft Amendment 4 is a small 33 page document with the sole intent of

shifting the southern flounder allocation one year early to “allow for more recreational access”. As I stated two weeks ago, shifting this allocation will do nothing to help the southern flounder stock and will likely not even result in more recreational access. The only thing Amendment 4 would assure is another commercial reduction.

The NCFA official position on this issue is to decrease the overall reduction from the current 72% target reduction. A lower 52% reduction would still meet regulatory statute and allow for more access for both the recreational and commercial sectors.

#### [Southern Flounder Amendment 4](#)

#### **Speckled Trout**

The MFC will vote on final adoption of Amendment 1 to the Spotted Seatrout FMP. The preferred management measures include commercial and recreational slot limits and weekend closures plus Mondays October through December for commercial harvest. The recreational preferred management measures equate to a 26.7% harvest reduction while the commercial reductions are a whopping 38.3% reduction. After the final vote the DMF and the MFC will implement these management strategies.

NCFA opposed throughout the process any management given the uncertainty and obvious abundance of speckled trout.

Now we also question the proposed slot limit which will create waste in a commercial fishery that produced very few discards. We also view the greater reduction being placed on the commercial sector as unnecessary.

#### [Spotted Seatrout Decision Document](#)

#### **Wild Oyster Harvest**

The MFC will review public comment and AC recommendations on Amendment 5 to the Eastern Oyster FMP. The DMF is still recommending large closure areas to mechanical oyster dredging at the mouths of the Pamlico and Neuse Rivers with little to no justification, no documentation of what the current health of the reef is, or even a habitat

recovery plan for the reef. Without this necessary information, it is hard to contemplate closing such a large, productive area that gets worked by very few oystermen.

Once preferred management options are selected at this meeting, the plan will go to the DEQ secretary for review and the MFC will vote on final adoption at their May meeting.

### [Oyster Decision Document](#)

#### **Wild Clam Harvest**

The MFC will review public comment and AC recommendations on Amendment 3 to the Hard Clam FMP. The DMF recommends phasing out mechanical clam harvest in three years (May 2028). This is a change from the previous DMF recommendation to phase out mechanical harvest unless participation increased to 10 participants and landings exceed 1 million clams in any year prior to 2027. With very few boats participating (2-3 boats the last few years) in this fishery and with boundary lines being continuously redrawn to protect encroaching SAV and oyster habit, most see this as yet another attempt to get a few more commercial fishermen off the water. Nothing more, nothing less.

Once preferred management options are selected at this meeting, the plan will go to the DEQ secretary for review and the MFC will vote on final adoption at their May meeting.

### [Hard Clam Decision Document](#)

#### **Blue Crab**

Last, but certainly not least, the MFC will be given an update on the Blue Crab FMP Amendment 3 Adaptive Management Update.

With a failed stock assessment, DMF says,

“there is little evidence suggesting overfishing has ended or sustainability objectives of Amendment 3 will be met. Because Amendment 3 is nearly half way through the required rebuilding timeline, management measures projected to rebuild spawner

abundance to a higher level with a much higher probability of success must be implemented."

DMF has outlined 8 options to reduce commercial blue crab harvest which can be viewed in the Decision Document. These options range anywhere from an 11.6% to a 51.6% harvest reduction.

The most "liberal" management option is a 20 bushel mature female limit September through December with a no mature female harvest January through May.

The most restrictive management option is a 10 bushel hard crab limit year-round.

The current DMF recommended management option is a 10 bushel limit for mature female blue crabs from June through December and a no harvest of mature female blue crabs January through May for a 21.7% harvest reduction.

Although no MFC action is required on this issue at the meeting, this is the time to show up, comment, and talk about what you are seeing on the water. They do not have the necessary information to be asking for these harsh reductions and you need to tell them why!

The timeline on this issue is a rather quick one. The draft Blue Crab Amendment 3 Adaptive Management will be presented to the ACs and up for public comment in March.

After public comment and AC review the MFC will vote on final approval of the preferred management measures at their May 2025 meeting.

### [Blue Crab Adaptive Management](#)

### **Public Comment**

Public comment will be accepted on these issues in person at the February MFC meeting, through the online portal, and/or through written comments.

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[Online Comment Portal](#)

Written comments can also be mailed to:

February 2025 Marine Fisheries Commission Meeting Comments  
P.O Box 769, Morehead City, N.C. 28557

Or hand delivered to:

Division of Marine Fisheries' Morehead City Headquarters Office  
3441 Arendell Street, Morehead City, N.C.

**Summary**

This is a lot of information about many important issues regarding our state's fishing resources. Please resend, text, forward and spread this information any way possible. Stay tuned for more updates and reach out with any questions or concerns.

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