



Fish Dealer Report



License & Statistics Section, PO Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557

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PRELIMINARY COMMERCIAL HARVEST RESULTS FOR 2010

Preliminary commercial harvest figures from the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries Trip Ticket Program show that commercial fishermen brought in 72 million pounds of fish and shellfish in 2010 with a dockside value of \$80 million. The 2010 harvest is a 4 percent increase over 2009 totals and a 2 percent increase over the previous 5-year landings average of 70 million pounds.

The top five species harvested in 2010 were blue crabs (30.7 million pounds), Atlantic croaker (7.3 million pounds), shrimp (5.9 million pounds) summer flounder (3.3 million pounds), and bluefish (3.2 million pounds).

Overall finfish harvest in the state remained consistent with a slight one-half percent increase over 2009. Croaker and bluefish harvest edged up in 2010, by 19 percent and 36 percent, respectively. Landings of striped bass, sharks, dogfish, swordfish and American eel were also up. Coinciding with increases in striped bass and eel harvests, there were 48 percent more beach seine trips made in 2010 than the previous year and 57 percent more trips made using eel pots.

Fewer dolphin, king mackerel, and tuna were landed in 2010. An overall 61 percent reduction in dolphin landings corresponded to fewer dolphin-targeted trips made with longline and trolling gears. Fishermen brought in 65 percent fewer dolphin using longline gear and landings by trolling gear dropped 52 percent. Trip data show a 4 percent decrease in surface longline trips overall and a 46 percent drop in trolling gear trips in 2010.

This drop in trolling trips also corresponds to a 58 percent drop in king mackerel landings from 2009. Landings of king mackerel by trolling gear were down 65 percent. Reports of cold water moving fish farther south during the winter months may

have contributed to fewer trips made for king mackerel.

The spring fishing season for tuna was slow on the coast. Landings of yellowfin tuna were down 33 percent, bigeye tuna down 43 percent and bluefin tuna down 65 percent.

Shellfish harvest rose by 8 percent over 2009. A significant increase in the use of oyster dredges (up 139 percent) resulted in fishermen bringing in 81 percent more oysters to the docks than in 2009. Oyster harvest is up 125 percent over the previous 5-year average. Crab season fared better in 2010, with hard crabs up 2 percent, soft crabs up 61 percent and peelers up 54 percent over the 2009 harvest.



NC oysters on oyster sanctuary structures.
Photo courtesy of DMF oyster program.

For more information on the latest harvest figures released by the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, please review the *2010 Annual NC Fisheries Bulletin*.

The Division of Marine Fisheries is dedicated to ensuring sustainable marine and estuarine fisheries and habitats for the benefit of the people of North Carolina.

TRIP TICKET DATA USED TO DETERMINE IMPACTS OF OREGON INLET CLOSURE

Data from the N.C. Trip Ticket Program were used to help determine the overall impact an Oregon Inlet closure would have to North Carolina's commercial fishing industry. In 2010, total commercial landings coming through Oregon Inlet were estimated at 16 million pounds and valued at \$15 million, nearly one quarter of North Carolina's commercial harvest.

The U.S. Coast Guard closed Oregon Inlet, a major waterway for North Carolina's commercial fishing fleet, to large vessel traffic this spring after it became too shallow to navigate. Federal funding limitations prevented the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers from meeting dredging requirements.

The closure forced large trawlers to divert their landings to Virginia, resulting in large quota transfers of summer flounder and black sea bass from North Carolina to Virginia. This year, approximately 1.4 million pounds of summer flounder quota and 23,000 pounds of black sea bass quota were transferred.

The issue gained the attention of N.C. Governor Bev Perdue, as well as North Carolina's Congressional delegation. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers moved a different dredge to Oregon Inlet to provide faster, more effective dredging capabilities for the channel. The dredge was to begin work April 16. A sustained closure of Oregon Inlet would have a significant negative impact on the state's commercial fishing industry.

NEW COASTAL FISHING RULES REORGANIZE AND CLARIFY EXISTING REGULATIONS



A slate of new coastal fishing rules went into effect April 1. The rules mostly reorganize

and clarify existing regulations. The rules were adopted by the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission at its Nov. 3-5 meeting.

The new rules:

- Define the terms "corkline," "headrope" and "lead" referred to in other rules;

- Correct a cross-reference to a definition for coral and live rock (this will not change the definition);
- Clarify that only those holding a Recreational Commercial Gear License that use pots authorized by the license are required to mark their pots with hot pink buoys;
- Broaden the existing proclamation authority of the director of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries for horseshoe crab management to maintain compliance with interstate regulations;
- Add a definition for pectoral fin curved fork length and allow commercially-caught bluefin tuna to be measured this way for consistency with federal regulations;
- Allow for the head of a commercially-caught tuna to be removed at sea, making state rules consistent with federal regulations;
- Require ocean fishing piers to submit a monthly report of the daily head counts of anglers so that the state can maintain exemption from the National Angler Registry;
- Require shellfish culture training certification for new lease applicants and transferees, as required by state law;
- Remove the requirement to notarize signatures on renewals of fishing permit applications;
- Classify Long Creek Gut and reclassify Eastham Creek as Primary Nursery Areas, and a portion of Chadwick Bay as a Special Secondary Nursery Area in accordance with N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries sampling criteria;
- Update the list of cross-references to no-trawling areas in Rule 03R .0106;
- Codify an existing proclamation that protects a coastal fishing reef/oyster sanctuary at Gibbs Shoal in Hyde County, and
- Reorganize the fisheries rulebook by removing repetitive or non-regulatory language in Subchapter 03H and relocating maps and marking regulations to Subchapter 03I;

Full texts of the new rules were published March 1 in the N.C. Register and can be found online at <http://www.oah.state.nc.us/rules/register/> in Volume 25, Issue 17 beginning on page 2022.

These rules appear in the new *North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 2011* rulebook which is available on the division's web page at <http://www.ncfisheries.net/rules.htm> under the "Fisheries Rulebook" link.

As a refresher, the index of the rulebook was completely revamped in 2009. The index is organized around five major headings: gear, lease, license, permit and species. For example, to look up information about **flounder**, see "species, flounder" under "**S**". Similarly, to look up information about **nets**, see "gear, net" under "**G**". Also, there is a narrative introduction in the rulebook that helps explain the rulemaking process and the jurisdictions of the various fisheries agencies. For more information, contact division Rules Coordinator Catherine Blum at (252) 808-8013 or Catherine.Blum@ncdenr.gov.

TRIP TICKET PROGRAM SURVEY RESULTS



The Trip Ticket Program Survey of Fish Dealers was conducted from October 2010 through January 2011. Surveys were mailed to active fish dealers to gather input regarding the program.

The survey is conducted every two years. Dealer responses let us know how we can best meet the needs of dealers and make continued improvements to the program. The response rate to this survey increased over the 2008 survey, with 234 out of 759 active dealers responding (a 31% response rate). The response rate for the 2008 survey was 22%.

For the following statements, dealers were asked to indicate their level of agreement to each statement: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD) or no opinion (N/O).

I received adequate instruction on the record-keeping requirements of the Trip Ticket Program:

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
40%	56%	0%	1%	3%

I am aware of the record-keeping requirements to follow:

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
39%	59%	1%	0%	1%

Trip tickets are easy to complete:

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
39%	55%	3%	0%	3%

The trip ticket design lets me record my data accurately:

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
36%	58%	1%	1%	4%

The trip ticket design lets me record my data in a timely manner.

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
36%	57%	3%	1%	3%

I am aware of the 10th of the month reporting due date.

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
39%	60%	1%	0%	0%

The Trip Ticket User Manual is helpful in finding answers to trip ticket questions.

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
21%	52%	5%	0%	22%

I receive supply requests on a timely basis.

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
48%	46%	0%	0%	6%

I always receive the supplies I ask for:

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
48%	44%	1%	0%	7%

I am satisfied with the customer service I receive from the Trip Ticket Office in Morehead City:

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
46%	46%	1%	0%	7%

I am satisfied with the customer service I receive from the Commercial Port Agent in my area:

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
38%	44%	0%	1%	17%

Enforcement of the Trip Ticket Program is sufficient:

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
31%	57%	2%	3%	7%

I support the addition of new fields on trip tickets to capture information on effort, such as yards of net and time fished:

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
9%	28%	30%	19%	14%

I support mandatory "electronic" reporting of trip tickets to ensure timely reporting of federally managed species.

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
9%	21%	28%	26%	16%

I support mandatory reporting of prices paid for seafood that is recorded on trip tickets.

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
5%	13%	30%	41%	11%

I support voluntary reporting of prices and would provide this information if asked.

SA	A	D	SD	N/O
9%	27%	26%	26%	12%

Dealers who report electronically also responded to questions regarding the division's computer software package. Twenty-nine out of 62 actively-reporting "electronic" dealers responded to the survey for a response rate of 47%. Dealers were asked how they would rate the electronic trip ticket program in regards to instruction and technical support received, the ease of using it, the suitability of the program to their needs, the user manual, their preference for the software over paper trip tickets, and their overall opinion of the program. Responses are as follows (N/O = No Opinion):



Instruction received.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	N/O
19%	26%	2%	0%	0%

Ease with which to use it.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	N/O
26%	21%	0%	0%	0%

Suitability to your needs.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	N/O
22.5%	22.5%	2%	0%	0%

Technical support received.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	N/O
31%	14%	2%	0%	0%

User manual.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	N/O
16%	19%	2%	0%	10%

Your preference over paper tickets.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	N/O
31%	16%	0%	0%	0%

Your overall opinion of it.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	N/O
26 %	21%	0%	0%	0%

Fish dealers who do not use the software program to record trip ticket landings were asked about their interest in it. The responses were as follows:

- 49 percent of respondents have a computer but still prefer using paper trip tickets over an electronic program.
- 23 percent do not own a computer and have no plans of purchasing one to report electronically.
- 2 percent own a computer and expressed interest in reporting electronically.
- 2 percent do not own a computer but would purchase one to be able to report electronically.
- 12 percent did not respond to the question.
- 12 percent are already using the software.

Trip ticket staff thanks all who responded to the survey. Comments, concerns and suggestions regarding the Trip Ticket Program are always welcome.

DMF LICENSE OFFICE CLOSINGS

The license office located in the Washington Regional Office closed April 1, 2011 and will remain closed for an indefinite period. Due to state budget cuts the division was unable to fill the license agent position vacated by a retirement. The Columbia license office is also slated to close July 1.

LICENSE SALES

Sales to date (as of April 17, 2011) by license type for the 2010 - 2011 license year. Active licenses only - totals do not include transfers, voids or replacements.

Standard Commercial Fishing License	5,179
Retired Standard Commercial Fishing License	1,026
Commercial Fishing Vessel Registration	8,603
License to Land Flounder from Atlantic Ocean	147
Land or Sell License	82
NC Resident Shellfish License Without SCFL	2,095
Menhaden License Non-Resident Without SCFL	12
Fish Dealer License	807
Spotter Plane License	10
Ocean Pier License	20
Recreational Fishing Tournament License	13
Recreational Commercial Gear License	4,802
Total Licenses For All License Types	22,796