



Fish Dealer Report



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

April 2013

INITIAL RESULTS FROM THE 2012 COMMERCIAL LANDINGS

Based on data collected from the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries Trip Ticket Program, 56.7 million pounds of finfish and shellfish were landed in 2012 with a dockside value of \$72.8 million. This reflects a 16 percent drop in landings when compared with the 2011 harvest but a 2.6 percent increase in value. Harvest levels for the previous five years averaged 67.3 million pounds.

The top five species by poundage for 2012 were blue crabs (26.8 million pounds), followed by shrimp (6.1 million pounds), Atlantic croaker (3.1 million pounds), spiny dogfish (2.7 million pounds), and striped mullet (1.9 million pounds).

Blue crab landings for 2012 were down about 11 percent from the previous year. Hard blue crab landings decreased 10 percent while peelers and soft blue crabs decreased 25 percent and 27 percent, respectively. This overall reduction occurred in tandem with 91 percent and 93 percent decreases in crab trawl and crab dredge trips, respectively.

Shrimp landings increased by 19 percent in 2012 to a four-year high. This increase is largely due to a large increase of pink shrimp landings, which were 337 times greater than in 2011, as well as an increase in white shrimp landings, up 2.5 times greater. The landings increase coincided with a 42 percent increase in the number of shrimp trawl trips and with a 230 percent increase in the number of skimmer trawl trips.

Landings of Atlantic croaker were down by 39 percent from 2011 landings. This is the second year of reduced croaker landings and is likely a result of fewer flynet trips landed through Oregon Inlet.

Striped mullet landings were up 14 percent from 2011 and have been steady over the previous five years.

Spiny dogfish landings have been steadily increasing due to quota increases over the last five years from 158,727 pounds in 2008 to the high of 2,728,876 pounds in 2012 as quotas have increased.

In October 2012, Hurricane Sandy added to continuing navigation issues with the inlet and resulted in a further reduction of flynet and flounder trawl trips landed in North Carolina. These two gears account for the majority of the Atlantic menhaden, squid and summer flounder landings in North Carolina. Atlantic menhaden landings were 85% lower, squid landings were 99 percent lower and summer flounder landings were down by 62 percent.



Blue crabs were again the top species by poundage for 2012

Landings of oysters were down by 45 percent. This coincided with a 70 percent decrease in the number of oyster dredge trips. The reductions were most likely from a combination of lingering effects from Hurricane Irene, which caused high mortality in the western Pamlico Sound, and a major mortality event in the lower Neuse River.

For a full listing of pounds and ex-vessel value by species and further information on the last year's landings results see the *2012 Annual Fisheries Bulletin*. The bulletin also contains landings for 2008 to 2011 and a summary of the number of trips by major gears used in N.C.

NEW ELECTRONIC REPORTING REQUIREMENTS COMING

Effective June 1, all seafood dealers who average at least 50,000 pounds of finfish landings over the most recent three years will be required to report electronically using the Trip Ticket software program. Trip Ticket staff will analyze the landings data to determine which seafood dealers meet this new requirement. Seafood dealers that meet this requirement and do not already report electronically will be sent a certified letter notifying them of the rule. Seafood dealers will have 120 days to comply after receipt of the certified letter. For more information about the Trip Ticket software program, please contact your port agent or Grace Kemp at 800-682-2632, extension 8101.

HMS REQUIREMENTS AND ELECTRONIC REPORTING SOFTWARE UPDATE

The National Marine Fisheries Service Highly Migratory Species Division (NMFS HMS) set new electronic reporting requirements which took effect on Jan. 1. All North Carolina seafood dealers who hold a federal permit to deal in sharks, swordfish, yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, and albacore tuna should now report their landings electronically. N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries staff, along with staff from NOAA and Bluefin Data, LLC software company, have been working to resolve any issues dealers have experienced as a result of this software update. In addition, all dealers should ensure they are using the most up to date version of the Trip Ticket Program software, Version 6.0.5. For questions or assistance with software issues please contact Grace Kemp, DMF, at 800-

682-2632 or Jackie Wilson, NMFS HMS, at 240-338-3936.

IMPORTANCE OF OBSERVER COVERAGE IN COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

Observer programs are designed to collect information on species composition of the catch, discards and protected species interactions. N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries observers are biological staff or Marine Patrol officers who collect data onboard commercial vessels or from a division vessel operated in the vicinity of gear being fished. Marine Fisheries Commission rules require licensed fishermen to carry to obtain biological data, harvest information, or other statistical data. Failure to carry observers when requested could lead to enforcement actions against the fisherman. More information about the observer program can be found at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/observer-program>.

The National Marine Fisheries Service requires states to be in compliance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. The division has applied for incidental take permits under Section 10 of the federal Endangered Species Act that cover large and small mesh gill nets for sea turtles and Atlantic sturgeon throughout the state's estuarine waters. A Section 10 incidental take permit allows for a certain number of protected species to be taken before a fishery must close. Each permit requires minimum observer coverage for large and small mesh gill net trips statewide, including areas previously exempted from observer coverage. Currently, the division is working under a settlement agreement with the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center requiring a minimum of 7 percent observer coverage and a goal of 10 percent for large mesh gill net trips in North Carolina waters. In order to achieve this coverage, the division relies on commercial fishermen to take observers. If the division is unable to provide this minimum coverage, then large mesh gill nets may be prohibited

statewide by proclamation until such time that the minimum coverage can resume. Therefore, cooperation from commercial fishermen is essential for achieving the necessary observer coverage to allow the estuarine gill net fishery to continue operating.

NEW TAGGING REQUIREMENTS FOR STRIPED BASS COMING FOR 2014 FISHING SEASON

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved changes to the Atlantic Striped Bass Interstate Fishery Management Plan in August 2012. The approved Addendum III will require changes to the striped bass tagging and reporting program. The first change will be a modification to the information printed on each tag to include year issued, state issued, and the minimum size limit. The second change will require seafood dealers to record the beginning and ending unique sequence numbers of the tags they have used each day in a dealer logbook. At the end of the fishing season, all unused tags and logbooks will be collected by Marine Patrol. The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries is already making some of the necessary internal changes and is currently looking for suggestions on how best to implement the dealer logbook portion of these requirements. The purpose of these measures is to help eliminate practices that can lead to the illegal commercial harvest of striped bass. These measures will not be implemented in North Carolina until the 2014 fishing season. For more information about these requirements or suggestions on how to implement the dealer logbook, contact Michelle Duval at 800-682- 2632, extension 8011 or Michelle.Duval@ncdenr.gov or Capt. Donnie Twyne at 252-473-5734, extension 235 or Donovan.Twyne@ncdenr.gov. Addendum III to Amendment 6 to Atlantic Striped Bass Interstate Fishery Management Plan can be found at <http://www.asmfmc.org>.

FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATES

State law requires the division to prepare a fishery management plan for adoption by the Marine Fisheries Commission for all commercially and recreationally significant species or fisheries in North Carolina. These plans provide management strategies designed to ensure long-term viability of each fishery. State law also requires N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries to review each plan every five years.

Following are highlights from fishery management plans currently under review.

- At its November 2012 meeting, the commission voted to begin the process of amending the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan with a focus on bycatch and associated issues.
- At its February 2013 meeting, the commission approved the goal and objectives of the Bay Scallop Fishery Management Plan Amendment 2, as well as the goal and objectives of the River Herring Fishery Management Plan Amendment 2.
- Proposed rules in support of the Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan are pending approval of fiscal analyses by the Office of State Budget and Management before notice of text can be approved and submitted, which is scheduled to occur at the May 2013 commission meeting.

For more information regarding upcoming fishery management plan reviews, please see the News Releases page at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/news-releases>

SHEEPSHEAD MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

Sheepshead was removed from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Snapper-Grouper Complex in 2012. As a result, there is no current authority for its management in state waters. The Marine Fisheries Commission is seeking input from

the Finfish and regional advisory committees for specific management strategies. A rule has been proposed giving the division director proclamation authority. If adopted, this rule would not take effect until at least April 1, 2014.

CONVERSION FACTOR STUDY COMPLETED

Trip Ticket Program staff received funding from the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program to complete a conversion factor project which was initiated as a pilot project in December 2008. The goals of the project were to validate and update the conversion factors used to calculate the whole weights of seafood products from the landed weight. Since most fish quotas are based upon whole weight, conversion factors are a fundamental tool in the management process. The findings of the current study expanded the results of the pilot project and indicated that the conversion factors used by the Trip Ticket Program were in need of updating. The data collected from this project will be combined with data from other ACCSP partners and will be used to determine if conversion factors should differ spatially.

AMERICAN EEL LOGBOOKS

North Carolina initiated an eel pot logbook program to collect additional harvest information on American eels on Jan. 1, 2007. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Addendum I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Eel requires all states where eels are harvested to collect catch and effort information for use in future stock assessments. Based on the way eels are commonly handled (landings from several trips combined on one trip ticket) and the fact that trip tickets gather only information on pounds of eels at the time of sale, it was determined a fisherman-based logbook system would gather the most accurate effort information (number of eel pots fished, pounds harvested, and soak time).

Fishermen harvesting eels with eel pots are required to fill out logbooks on a per trip basis, noting the

number of eel pots fished, pounds harvested, soak time and the trip ticket number the landings are sold under. Completed logbooks are due by the 10th of the following month to the division. All commercial fishermen will be reminded of these requirements when they renew their licenses. If fishermen need any logbooks, supplies, or have any questions they should contact Garry Wright at 800-338-7804, extension 3872.

**NCMFC Business Meeting Schedule
for the Remainder of 2013**

May 29-30: Crystal Coast Civic Center,
Morehead City

August 28-30: DoubleTree, Raleigh

November 13-15: Location TBD

LICENSE SALES

JULY 1, 2012 to APRIL 15, 2013

Sales to date (as of April 15, 2013) by license type for the 2013 license year. The values below include active licenses only. Totals do not include transfers, replacements or voids.

Standard Commercial Fishing License	5,643
Retired Standard Commercial Fishing License	1,121
Commercial Fishing Vessel Registration	8,575
License to Land Flounder from Atlantic Ocean	157
Land or Sell License	72
NC Resident Shellfish License Without SCFL	1,771
Menhaden License Non-Resident Without SCFL	10
Fish Dealer License	786
Spotter Plane License	8
Ocean Pier License	20
Recreational Fishing Tournament License	25
Recreational Commercial Gear License	4,788
Total Licenses For All License Types	22,976

Licenses for license year 2014 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014) went on sale April 15, 2013 and renewal by mail is available. If you want to avoid the lines at the license office, please use the mail-in process.