



Dare County Democratic Party opposes redefining commercial fishermen

WHEREAS, commercial fishing is a critical part of North Carolina's coastal economic engine, as well as plays a significant role in the history and heritage of the coast as well as the State; and

WHEREAS, the definition of commercial fishing is embodied in its name - harvesting fish and entering them into the State's chain of commerce; and

WHEREAS, according to the NC Division of Marine Fisheries, the sales impact of the harvesting and sale of commercial seafood is \$388,325,000 and the income impact of employed commercial fisherman is \$166,066,000; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) now wants to change the definition of a commercial fisherman as the first step toward reducing the number of Standard Commercial Fishing Licenses as well as other commercial licenses; and

WHEREAS, MFC's stated purpose for pursuing the change is that recreational fishermen are obtaining commercial fishing licenses in an effort to bypass recreational creel limits; and

WHEREAS, obtaining a professional license under fraudulent circumstances is a crime, thus if this issue exists, it is an enforcement issue not a definition problem; and

WHEREAS, MFC presented as "evidence" that trip tickets used to collect harvest data were issued to approximately 3,000 licensed fishermen in 2017, thus leaving about 4,000 licensed fishermen with no record of participation; and

WHEREAS, many licensed commercial fishermen pool fishing efforts to reduce costs and for safety issues, one person on the boat appears on the trip ticket although others are involved; and

WHEREAS, many licensed commercial fishermen also crew for others in exchange for a share of the catch, thus, their names also do not appear on trip tickets; and

WHEREAS, among options to be considered in whole and in part are mandatory 50 percent of total annual earned income reported through the Trip Ticket Program, 36 trip tickets per year, and those without trip tickets must present proof of earning \$10,000 or more per year from participating in commercial fishing; and

WHEREAS, no other professional license issued by the State dictates a percentage of income or minimum income requirement or level of participation in order to qualify; and

WHEREAS, the coastal economy is seasonal in nature, thus, many engage in several occupations as seasons change to meet their budget needs; and

WHEREAS, to comply with the presented options, some commercial fishermen would have to fish more thus adding to the amount of harvest taken out of the water or eliminate or reduce effort one or more of their other occupations in order to reach the 50 percent minimum; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Dare County Democratic Party opposes changes prescribed based on misrepresenting the intention of the action and lacking a solid legal basis; and

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Dare County Democratic Party requests other groups and organizations also go on record opposing this action.

Adopted Jan. 22, 2018.

 Melissa Dickerson, Chair