



NC Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell Street
Morehead City, NC 28557

May 14, 2015

Dr Daniel,

This letter is to help you understand that there is no depletion in North Carolina's southern flounder stocks. I want to insure that there are no changes to the southern flounder fishery that is so important to our NC economy and to our state's coastal communities. The value of the southern flounder fishery is one of the highest of any seafood that is available to the consumer in our state.

I am providing facts and figures below that will help you understand that there is no need for further restrictions or a closure. The commercial southern flounder fishery is not "trending downward" -

- From 2004 through 2013, the 10-year average landings of southern flounder were just over 2 million pounds.
- From 2004 to 2009, fishermen were allowed to catch and set flounder nets 365 days per year.
- Beginning in 2009-2010, a new regulation restricted large mesh nets to 40 hours per week. Over half the state is restricted to 4 days per week with night time soaks only.
- In 2011, there were only 1.2 million pounds caught by commercial fishermen.
- In 2013 there were close to 2.2 million pounds caught by commercial fishermen.
- In 2013, southern flounder landings in Dare County were 1.3 million pounds.
- In 2013, from June 1 to November 30, there were only 70 days in which large mesh nets were able to be used from Oregon Inlet down to South Carolina. Fishermen could only set nets 4 days per week. Plus, there was a 2-month closure during this time frame to all large mesh nets.
- The point being, the largest body of water in the state had only 70 days that allowed fishermen to use nets for southern flounder in 2013, and still the commercial landings exceeded the 10-year average by 200,000 pounds, even though half of the 10-year average allowed flounder fishing with nets 365 days per year.

- In 2014, southern flounder landings went down to 1.66 million pounds because the state shut down fishing with large mesh nets during peak flounder fishing times, in peak areas.
- In 2014, from Currituck and Albemarle Sounds south to the SC line, there were only 82 days open to set large mesh gill nets for flounder.

In summary, more southern flounder are being caught with much less fishing time.

The southern flounder fishery management plan cannot compare landings from years ago when fishermen could 365 days a year, and now only about half of the state's coastal areas allow flounder nets to be used 70 days per year. Even the NC State Biologist disagrees with the MFC about a depletion of southern flounder.

All of the above information came from the NCDMF statistics office and from NCDMF Proclamations that show a marked decrease in fishing time. By proof from NCDMF Proclamations, southern flounder are underfished now more than ever, NOT overfished. Southern flounder are considered a depleted stock by the NCDMF, but there is not one bit of scientific data to back up this myth.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours truly,

Andrew Berry

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