



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

M-26-2025

PROCLAMATION

RE: GILL NET RESTRICTIONS – INTERNAL COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS SOUTH OF MANAGEMENT UNIT A – CLOSES ALL MANAGEMENT UNITS TO THE USE OF GILL NETS WITH STRETCHED MESH LENGTH OF 4 INCHES THROUGH 6 ½ INCHES

This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-23-2025 dated October 20, 2025. This proclamation closes all management units south of Management Unit A to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches (except as described in Section II.) and maintains no allowance of large mesh gill nets above 6 ½ inches stretch mesh length, in accordance with Amendment 4 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan and the Federal Incidental Take Permit for endangered or threatened Sea Turtles and endangered Sturgeon.

Kathy B. Rawls, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective at **12:01 A.M., November 21, 2025**, the following restrictions shall apply to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches and greater in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters south of Management Unit A (south of 35° 46.3000' N latitude):

I. GEAR RESTRICTIONS:

- A. It shall be unlawful to use gill nets with a stretched mesh length greater than 6 ½ inches.
- B. It shall be unlawful to use gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches except those described in Section II.

II. GEAR EXEMPTIONS AND RESTRICTIONS FOR RUN-AROUND, STRIKE, DROP, AND DRIFT GILL NETS

- A. Exempted gear definitions:
 - 1. Run-around, strike, or drop gill nets - gill nets that are actively fished by either (1) using the boat to run a net around a school of fish, creating a closed circle, or (2) using the boat after the net is set to herd fish into the net without delay, whereby soak time does not exceed 30 minutes from the end of the set to the beginning of the haul.
 - 2. Drift gill nets - gill nets that are used to capture fish while being moved along by water currents whereby the net stays attached to the vessel from deployment through retrieval.
- B. **It shall be unlawful to use run-around, strike, drift, and drop gill nets with a stretched mesh length 5 inches or greater.**
- C. It shall be unlawful to use or possess more than 800 yards of run-around, strike, drop, and drift gill net per SCFL/RSCFL holder or per vessel regardless of the number of license holders on the vessel.

III. SEA TURTLE AND ATLANTIC STURGEON INTERACTION REPORTING

It shall be unlawful to fail to report any sea turtle or sturgeon captured in gill nets permitted by the Incidental Take Permit (ITP). Reports shall be made within 24 hours of the capture to the Division

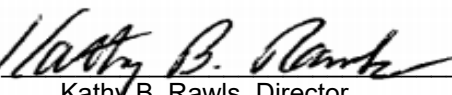
of Marine Fisheries at 252-515-5500 or 800-682-2632. Self-reported takes of sea turtles and sturgeon by fishermen fishing without an observer do not count toward the allowable takes in the Incidental Take Permits.

IV. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- A. This proclamation is issued under the authority of N.C.G.S. 113-134; 113-170.4; 113-170.5; 113-182; 113.182.1; 113-221.1; 143B-289.52 and N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 15A NCAC 03H .0103, 03J .0103, and 03M .0503.
- B. It is unlawful to violate the provisions of any proclamation issued by the Fisheries Director under their delegated authority pursuant to N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03H .0103.
- C. **All other existing gill net rules and proclamations remain in effect.** See <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/rules-proclamations-and-size-and-bag-limits/fisheries-management-proclamations#currentprocs> to refer to those M-type proclamations for gill net regulations that may be effective in the areas covered by this proclamation.
- D. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03J .0103 (b)(3)(A) it shall be unlawful for gill net mesh length to exceed 6 ½ inches in Internal Coastal Fishing Waters.
- E. The restrictions in this proclamation apply to and are in addition to the maximum allowed yardage for Recreational Commercial Gear License holders described in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0302.
- F. Proclamation [M-1-2024](#), dated December 15, 2023, prohibits the setting of gill nets in the Joint Fishing Waters of the state from midnight on Friday to midnight on Sunday each week. Portions of Albemarle and Currituck sounds are exempt from that provision.
- G. Proclamation [M-15-2025](#), dated August 29, 2025, reopens areas of the Pamlico and Neuse rivers previously closed to gill nets and implements tie-down (vertical net height restrictions) and distance from shore restrictions for ITP non-exempt (i.e., fixed, stationary, or anchored) gill nets with a stretched mesh length five inches or greater in the western Pamlico Sound and rivers in accordance with Amendment 2 to the N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan.
- H. The small mesh gill net attendance requirements in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03J .0103 (g) and (i) and 03R .0112, mesh length restrictions in 03J .0103 (a)(2), navigational passage requirements in 03J .0101, as well as all other existing gill net rules and proclamations remain in effect.
- I. Proclamation [M-2-2025](#) dated December 16, 2024, requires holders of a Standard Commercial Fishing License (SCFL), Retired Standard Commercial Fishing License (RSCFL), or Recreational Commercial Gear License (RCGL) who deploy gill nets in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters with an exception for run-around, strike, drop or drift gill nets, to possess a valid Estuarine Gill Net Permit issued by the Division of Marine Fisheries.
- J. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0113 specifies that it shall be unlawful for any licensee under Chapter 113, Subchapter IV of the General Statutes to refuse to allow the Fisheries Director or their agents to obtain biological data, harvest information, or other statistical data necessary or useful to the conservation and management of marine and estuarine resources from fish in the licensee's possession. The Division of Marine Fisheries has implemented an Estuarine Gill Net Permit and an observer program as an inspection procedure to obtain such data.
- K. For gill net restrictions in the Albemarle Sound Area (Incidental Take Permit-Management Unit A) refer to the most recent M-type proclamations for that area.
- L. The Division of Marine Fisheries has received the Endangered Species Act Incidental Take Permits (ITP) for threatened or endangered sea turtles, and endangered sturgeon.

This ITP allows the legal continuation of the inshore gill net fisheries in North Carolina, subject to permit conditions. The ITP conditions are designed to monitor, avoid and minimize, and mitigate interactions with these species in gill net fisheries permitted by the ITP (i.e., non-exempted gill net fisheries). Permit conditions require the division to provide 7-10 percent observer coverage in the permitted large mesh gill net fishery and 1-2 percent observer coverage in the permitted small mesh gill net fishery in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters. **If the required coverage is not maintained, large and small mesh gill nets could be prohibited in all Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters.**

- M. The Pamlico Sound is closed annually from September 1 through December 15 each year to gill nets with a stretched mesh length $>4\frac{1}{4}$ inches by National Marine Fisheries Service, Federal Rule 50 CFR Part 223. The ITP allows an exemption to this rule in certain areas within the Pamlico Sound.
- N. The intent of this proclamation is to implement gill net restrictions for gill nets with a stretched mesh length 4 inches through $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in accordance with Amendment 4 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan and allow directed and bycatch fisheries for various species while minimizing interactions with threatened and/or endangered species.
- O. In accordance with N.C. General Statute 113-221(f) and 113-221.1(c) all persons who may be affected by rules and proclamations issued by the Fisheries Director are under a duty to keep themselves informed of current rules and proclamations. Multiple rules and proclamations regulating a fishery, species, gear, etc. may be in effect concurrently.
- P. Contact N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557; 252-515-5500 or 800-682-2632 for more information or visit the division website at <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries>.
- Q. **This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-23-2025 dated October 20, 2025. This proclamation closes all management units south of Management Unit A to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches (except as described in Section II.) and maintains no allowance of large mesh gill nets above $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches stretch mesh length, in accordance with Amendment 4 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan and the Federal Incidental Take Permit for endangered or threatened Sea Turtles and endangered Sturgeon.**

By: 
Kathy B. Rawls, Director
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

November 18, 2025
3:00 P.M.