



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

FF-8-2026

PROCLAMATION

RE: SHAD – COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL – COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS INCLUDING THE ATLANTIC OCEAN – TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF RULES

This proclamation supersedes proclamation FF-8-2025, dated December 18, 2024. This proclamation sets the 2026 commercial and recreational seasons and harvest restrictions for the taking of American shad and hickory shad in Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters including the Atlantic Ocean.

Kathy B. Rawls, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective at **12:01 A.M., Thursday, January 1, 2026**, the following restrictions will apply in Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters including the Atlantic Ocean to the taking of **American shad and hickory shad for commercial and recreational purposes:**

I. TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF RULES

A. The following portion of N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03Q .0107 is suspended:

Paragraph (4) which reads:

- (4) Shad: It is unlawful to possess more than 10 American shad or hickory shad, in the aggregate, per person per day taken by hook-and-line.

II. HARVEST RESTRICTIONS-COMMERCIAL (SEE SECTION IV. and V. FOR ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS)

A. CAPE FEAR RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES

1. It shall be unlawful to possess American shad for commercial purposes prior to 12:01 A.M. Friday, February 20, 2026, and after 11:59 P.M. Saturday, April 11, 2026.
2. It shall be unlawful to possess hickory shad for commercial purposes prior to 12:01 A.M., Thursday, January 1, 2026, and after 11:59 P.M., Tuesday, April 14, 2026.

B. ATLANTIC OCEAN

1. It shall be unlawful to possess hickory shad for commercial purposes prior to 12:01 A.M., Thursday, January 1, 2026, and after 11:59 P.M., Tuesday, April 14, 2026.

C. ALL OTHER INTERNAL COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS

1. It shall be unlawful to possess American shad for commercial purposes prior to 12:01 A.M. Sunday, February 15, 2026, and after 11:59 P.M., Tuesday, April 14, 2026.
2. It shall be unlawful to possess hickory shad for commercial purposes prior to 12:01 A.M., Thursday, January 1, 2026, and after 11:59 P.M., Tuesday, April 14, 2026.

III. **HARVEST RESTRICTIONS-RECREATIONAL**

A. **PAMLICO AND PUNGO RIVERS AND TRIBUTARIES**

1. It shall be unlawful to possess more than ten (10) American shad or hickory shad, in the aggregate, per person per day for recreational purposes.
2. It shall be unlawful to possess American shad or hickory shad for recreational purposes by any method except hook-and-line after 11:59 P.M., Tuesday, April 14, 2026.

B. **CAPE FEAR RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES**

1. It shall be unlawful to possess more than ten (10) American shad or hickory shad in the aggregate, per person per day for recreational purposes and only five (5) of the ten (10) may be an American shad.
2. It shall be unlawful to possess American shad or hickory shad for recreational purposes by any method except hook-and-line after 11:59 P.M., Tuesday, April 14, 2026.

C. **ATLANTIC OCEAN**

1. It shall be unlawful to possess more than ten (10) hickory shad per person per day for recreational purposes.
2. It shall be unlawful to possess hickory shad for recreational purposes by any method except hook-and-line after 11:59 P.M., Tuesday, April 14, 2026.

D. **ALL OTHER INTERNAL COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS**

1. It shall be unlawful to possess more than ten (10) American shad or hickory shad in the aggregate, per person per day for recreational purposes and only one (1) of the ten (10) may be an American shad.
2. It shall be unlawful to possess American shad or hickory shad for recreational purposes by any method except hook-and-line after 11:59 P.M., Tuesday, April 14, 2026.

IV. **TRANSPORTATION EXEMPTION**

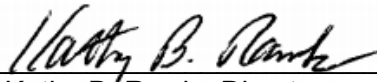
Commercial fishing operations or recreational harvest shall be exempt from the transportation requirement set out in 15A NCAC 03I .0120 when transporting shad in waterbodies that are closed to harvest. Commercial fishing operations and recreational harvest are not exempt when in possession of shad and harvesting shad in a closed area. This exemption is from 12:01 A.M., Thursday, January 1, 2026, to 11:59 P.M., Tuesday, April 14, 2026.

V. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- A. This proclamation is issued under the authority of N.C.G.S. 113-134; 113-134.1; 113-170.4; 113-170.5; 113-181; 113-182; 113-182.1 113-221.1; 143B-289.52 and N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 15A NCAC 03H .0103 and 03M .0512.
- 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. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0519, it shall be unlawful to possess American shad taken from the Atlantic Ocean.
- D. In accordance with N.C. General Statute 113-221.1(c), all persons who may be affected by proclamations issued by the Fisheries Director are under a duty to keep themselves informed of current proclamations.
- E. The intent of this proclamation is to implement the provisions of the N.C. American Shad Sustainable Fishery Plan as part of Amendment 3 to the Atlantic States Marine

Fisheries Commission Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Shad and River Herring.

- F. Proclamation [M-12-2025](#), dated June 3, 2025 prohibits the use of gill nets during the weekend in the Joint Fishing Waters of the state. The closure is effective from 12:01 A.M. on Saturday to 12:01 A.M. on Monday of each week. Portions of Albemarle and Currituck sounds are exempt from that provision in accordance with Amendment 1 to the N.C. Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan.
- G. 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://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries>.
- H. **This proclamation sets the 2026 commercial and recreational seasons and harvest restrictions for the taking of American shad and hickory shad in Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters including the Atlantic Ocean.**

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

December 17, 2025
10:00 A.M.