



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

FF-14-2026

PROCLAMATION

RE: SHEEPSHEAD – RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL – COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS

This proclamation supersedes proclamation FF-28-2015 dated May 28, 2015. This proclamation increases the minimum size limit and changes the length measure to total length, implements a commercial trip limit for the pound net fishery, maintains commercial trip limits for all other commercial gears, and decreases the recreational creel limit for the sheepshead fishery in Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters.

Kathy B. Rawls, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective **at 12:01 A.M., March 1, 2026**, the following restrictions will apply to the recreational and commercial sheepshead fisheries in Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters.

I. MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT

It shall be unlawful to possess sheepshead less than 14 inches total length.

II. RECREATIONAL HARVEST LIMIT

It shall be unlawful to possess for recreational purposes no more than 5 sheepshead per person per day or per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive.

III. COMMERCIAL HARVEST LIMIT

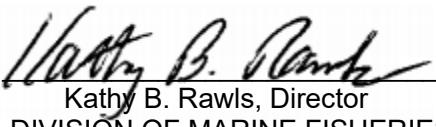
It shall be unlawful for a commercial fishing operation consisting of more than one SCFL/RSCFL holder to take, possess, or land more than 300 pounds of sheepshead per day or per trip, whichever is more restrictive, except:

1. It shall be unlawful for commercial gig and spear operations to take, possess, or land more than 10 sheepshead per person per day or per trip, whichever is more restrictive.
2. It shall be unlawful for commercial pound net operations consisting of more than one SCFL/RSCFL holder to take, possess, or land more than 1,500 pounds of sheepshead per day or per trip, whichever is more restrictive.

IV. 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; 113-182; 113-221.1; 143B-289.52 and N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 15A NCAC 03H .0103 and 03M .0521.
- 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. 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.

- D. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0101(1)(d)(iv) Total Length means a length determined by measuring along a straight line the distance from the tip of the snout with the mouth closed to the tip of the compressed caudal (tail) fin.
- E. Fishermen are encouraged to return all sheepshead that do not meet harvest requirements immediately to the waters where taken in a manner that ensures the highest likelihood of survival.
- F. The intent of this proclamation is to manage sheepshead in Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters.
- G. Contact the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557; 252-515-5500 or 800-682-2632 or for more information visit the division website at <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries>.
- H. **This proclamation increases the minimum size limit and changes the length measure to total length, implements a commercial trip limit for the pound net fishery, maintains commercial trip limits for all other commercial gears, and decreases the recreational creel limit for the sheepshead fishery in Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters.**

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

February 16, 2026
3:00 P.M.