



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

FF-20-2026

PROCLAMATION

RE: ESTUARINE STRIPED BASS – COMMERCIAL FISHING OPERATIONS – SEASON OPEN – PORTIONS OF TAR-PAMLICO AND NEUSE RIVERS INTERNAL COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS

This proclamation supersedes proclamation FF-6-2018, dated February 23, 2018. This proclamation opens portions of the Tar-Pamlico and Neuse rivers in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Central Southern Management Area (CSMA) to the harvest of striped bass (including hybrids) for commercial purposes, sets the 2026 commercial striped bass season and harvest limits, and maintains the striped bass harvest closure in the remaining areas of the CSMA in accordance with the 2026 Revision to Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan.

Kathy B. Rawls, Director, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective at **12:01 A.M., Wednesday, April 1, 2026**, the following restrictions shall apply to the taking of striped bass for commercial purposes in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Central Southern Management Area (CSMA):

I. AREA DESCRIPTION ([See Map](#))

- A. Tar-Pamlico River: All Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters west of a line beginning at a point on the north shore 35° 25.1669' N - 76° 45.5251' W (Gum Point); running southwesterly to a point on the south shore 35° 23.4453' N - 76° 46.4346' W (Fork Point).
- B. Neuse River: All Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters west of a line beginning at a point on the north shore 35° 02.1433' N - 76° 55.9965' W (Cooper Point); running southwesterly to a point on the south shore at 35° 00.1550' N - 76° 58.5738' W (Fisher Landing Point).

II. SEASON

- A. It shall be unlawful to possess striped bass in the Central Southern Management Area (CSMA), as defined in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03R .0201 (c), except for commercial purposes from 12:01 A.M. on Wednesday April 1, 2026 through 11:59 P.M. on Thursday, April 30, 2026 in the areas described in Section I.
- B. It shall be unlawful for dealers to sell, offer for sale, transport, or have in possession unfrozen striped bass after 11:59 P.M. May 14, 2026.

III. SIZE AND TRIP LIMITS

In the areas and during the times described in Sections I and II:

- A. It shall be unlawful to take, possess, buy, sell, or offer for sale striped bass less than 18 inches total length.
- B. It shall be unlawful to take, possess, buy, sell, or offer for sale striped bass between 22- and 27-inches total length.

- C. It shall be unlawful for an individual or fishing operation, regardless of the number of persons or boats involved or the number of areas fished, to take, possess, transport, buy, sell, or offer for sale more than **one (1) striped bass per day** in any combined commercial fishing operation, **except that a fishing operation consisting of more than one Standard Commercial Fishing License (SCFL) or Retired Standard Commercial Fishing License (RSCFL) holder onboard** may be in possession of up to two (2) daily harvest limits.

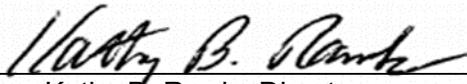
IV. LANDING RESTRICTIONS

- A. It shall be unlawful to purchase more than the daily harvest limit of striped bass from a SCFL or RSCFL holder or any combined commercial fishing operation in any one day as described in Section III.C.
- B. It shall be unlawful for a dealer to possess, buy, sell or offer for sale striped bass taken from the areas described in Section I. without having a N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries issued green colored tag affixed through the mouth and gill cover. In the case of striped bass imported from other states, a similar tag that is issued for striped bass in the state of origin must be affixed.
- C. It shall be unlawful to fail to comply with striped bass tagging requirements as described in Section IV. B. regardless of whether the striped bass is sold to a dealer or retained for personal consumption.

V. 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, 03M .0202, 03M. 0512, and 03Q. 0107.
- 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. See <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/rules-proclamations-and-size-and-bag-limits/fisheries-management-proclamations#currentprocs> refer to those M-type proclamations for commercial gear restrictions that may be effective in the areas covered by this proclamation.
- D. For Recreational Commercial Gear License refer to M-type proclamations for gill net regulations that may be effective in the areas covered by this proclamation and M-type proclamations for Estuarine Gill Net Permit and Observer Trip Scheduling System (refer to [M-4-2026](#) for reference).
- E. All striped bass taken during season closures and all striped bass less than 18 inches total length and between 22- and 27-inches total length shall be immediately returned to the waters taken, regardless of the condition of the fish.
- F. N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries striped bass tags may not be bought, sold, offered for sale, or transferred.
- G. **To request striped bass tags, please contact Todd Mathes (252-948-3872) with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries at the Washington Regional Office. Tags shall be picked up from the Washington Regional Office and any unused, lost, or broken tags must be returned to the Washington Regional Office.**
- H. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 3I .0123 requires commercial fisherman in North Carolina to report the harvest of all finfish, shellfish, and crustaceans to the Division of Marine Fisheries through the Trip Ticket Program using a licensed seafood dealer. This includes everything that is sold, as well as everything kept for personal consumption or otherwise not sold.

- I. Holders of Recreational Commercial Gear Licenses (RCGL) must follow the bag and harvest restrictions of the recreational fishery for striped bass. Commercial fishing equipment authorized by the Recreational Commercial Gear License is not considered commercial fishing equipment in the striped bass fishery and it is illegal to sell or purchase striped bass taken by this method in accordance with N.C.G.S. 113-173.
- J. 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>.
- K. 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.
- L. **This proclamation opens portions of the Tar-Pamlico and Neuse rivers in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Central Southern Management Area (CSMA) to the harvest of striped bass (including hybrids) for commercial purposes, sets the 2026 commercial striped bass season and harvest limits, and maintains the striped bass harvest closure in the remaining areas of the CSMA in accordance with the 2026 Revision to Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan.**

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

March 20, 2026
10:30 A.M.