



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

MICHAEL S. LOEFFLER
Interim Director

M-21-2026

PROCLAMATION

RE: GILL NET RESTRICTIONS - INTERNAL COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS SOUTH OF MANAGEMENT UNIT A – CLOSE MANAGEMENT UNITS D2 AND E TO THE USE OF GILL NETS WITH STRETCHED MESH LENGTH OF 4 INCHES THROUGH 6 ½ INCHES.

This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-20-2026 dated September 18, 2026. This proclamation closes Management Units D2 and E to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches (except as described in Section III.) and maintains openings in Management Units B (subunits only), C, and D1 (Northern subunit only) to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches (except as described in Section III.) in accordance with Amendment 4 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan and the Federal Incidental Take Permit for endangered and threatened Sea Turtles and endangered Sturgeon.

Michael S. Loeffler, Interim Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective at **12:01 A.M., Monday, October 5, 2026**, the following provisions shall apply to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches south of Management Unit A (south of 35° 46.3000' N latitude). Gill nets with stretched mesh length of 4 inches to less than 6 inches will remain closed except in accordance with Section III.

I. AREA DESCRIPTIONS AND RESTRICTIONS:

It shall be unlawful to use gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches in Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters except in Management Units B (subunits only), C and, D1 (Northern subunit only) ([Map 1](#)). Areas not listed are closed to gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches (except in accordance with Section III.; SEE SECTION II. FOR ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS):

- A. **Management Unit B:** Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of Pamlico Sound, including its bays and tributaries, bounded on the north by 35° 46.3000' N latitude which runs approximately from the north end of Pea Island (old Coast Guard station) westerly to a point on the shore at Point Peter Canal, bounded on the east by barrier islands, bounded on the west by 76° 30.000' W longitude, and bounded to the south across the mouth of Core Sound at 35° 0.000' N latitude; including Internal Coastal Fishing Waters of West Bay, West Thorofare Bay, and Long Bay ([Map 2](#)).

Subunits in Management Unit B open to gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches are described below as: Shallow Water Gill Net Restricted Areas (SGNRA1-SGNRA4), Mainland Gill Net Restricted Areas (MGNRA), and the West Bay Gill Net Restricted Area (WBGNRA) including West Bay, West Thorofare Bay, and Long Bay; **all other areas in Management Unit B are closed ([Map 2](#)):**

1. **SGNRA1**

The area from Portsmouth Island to Ocracoke Inlet bound by the following points: Beginning at a point on Core Banks at 35° 00.000' N – 76° 07.646' W, running west to 35° 00.000' N – 76° 11.760' W, then turning northwest to near Marker # 2CS at the mouth of Wainwright Channel at 35° 00.2780'N – 76° 12.1682'W, then running northeasterly near Marker "HL" at 35° 01.5665'N – 76° 11.4277'W, then running northeasterly near Marker #1 at 35° 09.7058'N – 76° 04.7528'W, then running southeasterly to a point at Beacon Island at 35° 05.9352'N – 76° 02.7408'W, then running south to a point on the northeast corner of Portsmouth Island at 35° 03.7014'N – 76° 02.2595'W, then running southwesterly along the shore of Core Banks to the point of beginning.

2. **SGNRA2**

The area from Ocracoke Inlet to Hatteras Inlet bound by the following points: Beginning at a point near Marker #7 at the mouth of Silver Lake at 35° 06.9091' N – 75° 59.3882'W, running north to a point at 35° 08.7925'N – 76° 00.3627'W near Big Foot Slough Entrance, then running easterly to a point at 35° 09.4994' N – 75° 54.2943'W, then running northeasterly to a point at 35° 11.9803'N – 75° 51.6396' W, then running easterly to a point at 35° 13.4489'N – 75° 47.5534'W, then running southerly to just northwest of the Ocracoke/Hatteras Ferry terminal on the Ocracoke side at 35° 11.5985'N – 75° 47.0768'W, then southwesterly along the shore to the point of beginning.

3. **SGNRA3**

The area from Hatteras to Avon Channel bound by the following points: Beginning at a point near Marker "HR" at 35° 13.3152 'N – 75° 41.6694'W, running northwest near Marker "42 RC" at Hatteras Channel at 35° 16.7617'N – 75° 44.2341'W, then running easterly to a point off Marker #2 at Cape Channel at 35° 19.0380'N – 75° 36.2993'W, then running northeasterly near Marker #1 at the Avon Channel Entrance at 35° 22.8212'N – 75° 33.5984'W, then running southeasterly near Marker #6 on Avon Channel at 35° 20.8224'N – 75° 31.5708'W, then running easterly near Marker #8 at 35° 20.9412'N – 75° 30.9058'W, then running to a point on shore at 35° 20.9562'N – 75° 30.8472'W, then following the shoreline in a southerly and westerly direction to the point of beginning.

4. **SGNRA4**

The area from Avon Channel to Rodanthe bound by the following points: Beginning at a point near Marker #1 at the Avon Channel Entrance at 35° 22.8212'N – 75° 33.5984'W, then running northerly to a point on Gull Island at 35° 28.4495'N – 75° 31.3247'W, then running north near Marker "ICC" at 35° 35.9891'N – 75° 31.2419'W, then running northwesterly to a point at 35° 41.0000'N – 75° 33.8397'W, then running easterly to a point on shore at 35° 41.0000'N – 75° 29.3271' W, then following the shoreline in a southerly direction to a point on shore near Avon Harbor at 35° 20.9562'N – 75° 30.8472'W, then running westerly near Marker #8 at 35° 20.9412' N – 75° 30.9058' W, then running westerly near Marker #6 on Avon Channel at 35° 20.8224'N – 75° 31.5708'W, then running northwesterly to the point of beginning.

5. **MGNRA**

The area on the mainland side of Pamlico Sound north of the 35° N parallel, **from the shoreline of Dare, Hyde, Pamlico, and Carteret counties out to 200 yards from shore**, between 76° 30.0000' W and 75° 42.4200'W longitude lines.

6. **WBGNRA**

Internal Coastal Fishing Waters of West Bay, West Thorofare Bay, and Long Bay.

- B. **Management Unit C:** Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters of the Pamlico, Pungo, Bay, and Neuse rivers drainages, Pamlico Sound west of 76° 30.0000'W, and Turnagain Bay. In Turnagain Bay north of the 35° N parallel and east of 76° 30.0000'W out to 200 yards from shore ([Map 3](#)).
- C. **Management Unit D1:** Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters in Core Sound and its tributaries south of 35° 0.000' N latitude running south and west to the Management Units D1 and D2 boundary at 34° 40.6740'N – 76° 37.0000'W to 34° 42.4800'N – 76° 37.0000'W then to the head of Turner Creek, and northerly up the western shoreline of the North River. Management Unit D1 includes Core Sound, Back Sound, The Straits, and North River, including all bays and their tributaries.

Subunits in Management Unit D1 ([Map 4](#)):

1. Northern D1: all Internal Coastal Fishing Waters of Core Sound bounded on the north by a line from 35° 0.000' N – 76° 7.646' W heading west along to 35° 0.000' N – 76° 15.107' W, bounded on the south by a line across Core Sound from 34° 48.270' N – 76° 27.507' W and then east to Core Banks at 34° 48.270' N – 76° 22.120' W. In Core Sound north of the 35th parallel out to 200 yards from shore. The Northern D1 subunit includes the northern portion of Core Sound; **all other areas in Management Unit D1 are closed ([Map 4](#)).**

II. ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS

- A. It shall be unlawful to use gill nets with stretched mesh length of 4 inches to less than 6 inches except as described in Section III.
- B. **It shall be unlawful for Recreational Commercial Gear License holders to use any gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches (except as described in Section III. A. and B.).**

III. 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.
- D. Run-around, strike, drop, and drift gill nets are exempt from the restrictions specified in Sections IV., V., and VI.

IV. GILL NET CONSTRUCTION AND USE REQUIREMENTS

It shall be unlawful to use gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches except in the Management Units and Subunits and constructed as described below:

- A. Management Unit B Subunits as described in Section I. A. 1-6:

1. It shall be unlawful to use gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches of more than 15 meshes in height and without a lead core or leaded bottom line.
 2. It shall be unlawful to use cork, floats, or other buoys except those required for identification.
 3. It shall be unlawful to use or possess more than 1,500 yards of gill net with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches per SCFL/RSCFL holder or per vessel regardless of the number of license holders on the vessel.
 4. It shall be unlawful to use a gill net more than 100 yards in length, with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches without leaving a space of at least 25 yards between separate lengths of net, regardless of individual net length.
- B. Management Unit C as described in Section I. B.:
1. It shall be unlawful to use or possess more than 1,500 yards of gill net with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches per SCFL/RSCFL holder or per vessel regardless of the number of license holders on the vessel
- C. Management Unit D1 Subunit Northern D1 as described in Section I. C. 1:
1. It shall be unlawful to use gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches of more than 15 meshes in height and without a lead core or leaded bottom line.
 2. It shall be unlawful to use cork, floats, or other buoys except those required for identification.
 3. It shall be unlawful to use or possess more than 1,500 yards of gill net with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches per SCFL/RSCFL holder or per vessel regardless of the number of license holders on the vessel.
 4. It shall be unlawful to use a gill net more than 100 yards in length, with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches without leaving a space of at least 25 yards between separate lengths of net, regardless of individual net length.

V. **GILL NET SETTING TIME REQUIREMENTS**

It shall be unlawful to use non-exempted gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 6 inches through 6 ½ inches other than during the setting and retrieval periods specified below. Only single night overnight soaks are permitted, and shall only be lawful if set and retrieved as follows:

- A. Nets set for Wednesday retrieval may be set no sooner than one hour before sunset on Tuesday and must be retrieved no later than one hour after sunrise on Wednesday.

VI. **SEA TURTLE AND 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 ITP.

VII. **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. In accordance with proclamation [FF-41-2026](#) it shall be unlawful to possess flounder taken from gill nets with a stretched mesh length less than 6 inches.
- C. [Proclamation M-7-2025](#) dated February 4, 2025, establishes the Observer Trip Scheduling System (OTSS) and requires holders of an Estuarine Gill Net Permit who deploy gill nets (except run-around, strike, drop, or drift gill nets) to either possess a valid OTSS confirmation number or have an authorized agent of the division present while fishing. To obtain either a confirmation number or an agent of the division, planned fishing activity must be reported at least one week in

- advance (Monday-Wednesday) by calling 800-487-8747 or online at <https://dmf.ncdenr.org/OTSSPublic/>.
- D. **A confirmation number, issued by the Observer Trip Scheduling System, does not legally permit the use of non-exempted gill nets in a closed Management Unit or area, or when such use is otherwise prohibited.**
- E. 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.
- F. **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.
- G. 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.
- H. 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.
- I. The restrictions in this proclamation as described for Recreational Commercial Gear License holders 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.
- J. Proclamation [M-12-2025](#) dated June 3, 2025, 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.
- K. 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.
- L. Proclamation [FF-26-2024](#) dated June 20, 2024 states that from January 1 through September 30, it shall be unlawful for a commercial fishing operation to take or land mullet for commercial purposes from 11:59 P.M. Friday to 12:01 A.M. Monday each week, and from October 1 through December 31, it shall be unlawful for a commercial fishing operation to take or land mullet for commercial purposes from 11:59 P.M. Friday to 12:01 A.M. Tuesday each week.
- M. Proclamation [FF-31-2026](#) dated September 29, 2025, states that from January 1 through September 30, it shall be unlawful for a commercial fishing operation to take or land spotted seatrout for commercial purposes from 11:59 P.M. Friday to 12:01 A.M. Monday each week, and from October 1 through December 31, it shall be unlawful to take or land spotted seatrout for commercial purposes from 11:59 P.M. Friday through 12:01 A.M. Tuesday each week.
- N. 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.
- O. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0503(f)(1)

a valid Estuarine Gill Net Permit issued by the Division of Marine Fisheries is required to deploy gill nets in Internal Coastal Fishing Waters with an exception for runaround, strike, drop or drift gill nets.

- P. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0501(b)(1) a valid Standard Commercial Fishing License (SCFL), Retired Standard Commercial Fishing License (RSCFL), or Recreational Commercial Gear License (RCGL) is required to hold an Estuarine Gill Net Permit.
- Q. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0113 specifies 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.
- R. **In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0503(e)(4) a valid Estuarine Flounder Dealer Permit issued by the Division of Marine Fisheries is required for any fish dealer to possess, purchase, sell or offer for sale flounder taken from Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters for the applicable fisheries and harvest area.**
- S. 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.
- T. The Division of Marine Fisheries has received an Endangered Species Act Incidental Take Permit (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 & 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 Waters. **If the required coverage is not maintained, large and small mesh gill nets permitted by the ITP could be prohibited in all Internal Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters.**
- U. 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.
- V. 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 while minimizing interactions with threatened and/or endangered species. Future proclamations will be issued to implement gear restrictions to correspond with flounder season closures approaching gear management area Total Allowable Landings specified in Amendment 4 or to implement ITP requirements.
- W. 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.
- X. 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 www.ncmarinefisheries.net.
- S. **This proclamation closes Management Units D2 and E to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh size of 4 inches through $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches (except as described in Section III.) and maintains openings in Management Units B (subunits only), C, and D1 (Northern subunit only) 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 III.) in accordance**

with Amendment 4 to the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan and the Federal Incidental Take Permit for endangered and threatened Sea Turtles and endangered Sturgeon.

By: 
Michael S. Loeffler, Interim Director
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

October 2, 2026
4:15 P.M.