



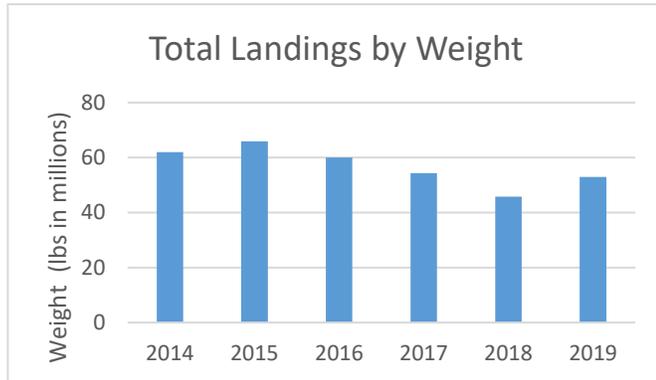
Fish Dealer Report

License & Statistics Section, PO Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557

May 2020

2019 COMMERCIAL LANDINGS REVIEW

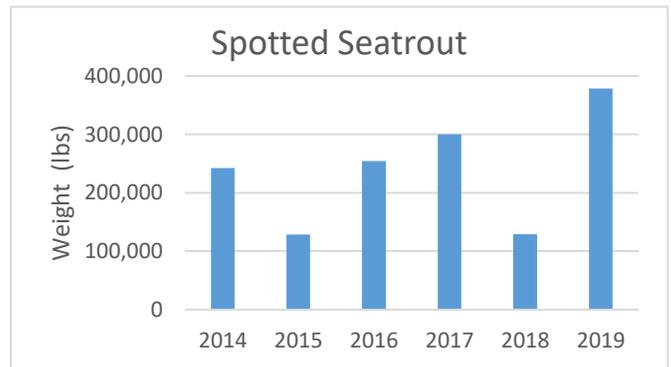
Commercial fishermen landed 53.0 million pounds of seafood with an estimated value of \$86.6 million in 2019. This was a 15.8% increase over the 2018 landings of 45.8 million pounds but was 8.0% less than the five-year average (2014-2018) of 57.6 million pounds.



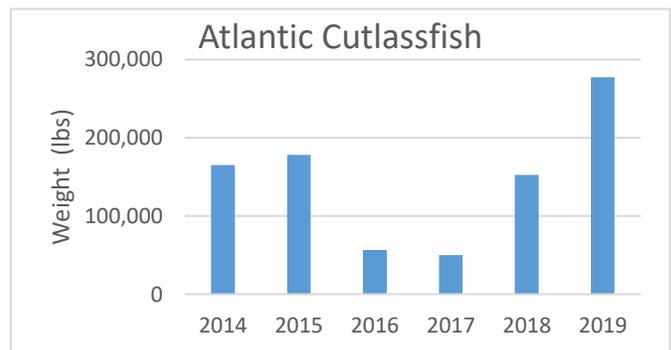
The top six species landed by weight were blue crab (hard crabs only), 22.3 million pounds; shrimp (all species), 9.5 million pounds; Summer Flounder, 2.0 million pounds; Striped Mullet, 1.4 million pounds; Atlantic Croaker, 1.3 million pounds; and catfishes (all species) 1.2 million pounds. The top five species landed by value were blue crab (hard crabs only), \$22.2 million; shrimp (all species), \$21.9 million; Summer Flounder, \$7.3 million; eastern oyster, \$4.9 million; and Southern Flounder, \$3.1 million.

Noteworthy increases in species landings from 2018 to 2019 were Weakfish, up 229%; Scup, up 175%; Spot, up 134%; Atlantic Cutlassfish, up 82%; and Sea Mullet, up 73%. Spotted Seatrout increased in commercial landings by 193% and in recreational landings by 406% from 2018 to 2019. They were the highest recreational landings for Spotted Seatrout since 1999. A very strong year

class from the previous year contributed to the high numbers of fish caught in both sectors.



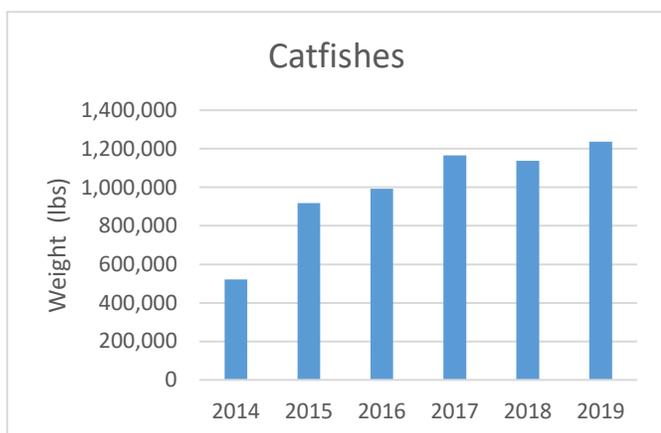
Increased landings of Atlantic Cutlassfish over the past few years have resulted from a heightened interest in targeting these species that “jump like tarpon” and are delicious to eat. While Atlantic Cutlassfish are difficult to clean, they still bring in good value at the market. The value of this fishery grew to almost \$500,000 in 2019.



Noteworthy decreases in landings from 2018 to 2019 were Red Drum, down 61%; Smooth Dogfish, down 51%; and hard clams, down 41%. The decrease in Red Drum landings was attributed to a poor year class. A good year class is expected in 2020, so landings could rebound.

INCREASES IN CATFISH LANDINGS

Based on data collected through the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries Trip Ticket Program, overall landings of catfishes have increased in the past few years. The estimated 2014 to 2019 average dockside value was \$269,458. The estimated five-year average landed was 946,920 pounds, with higher landings in 2019 (1.2 million pounds). Primary gears used to harvest catfishes were gill nets, pound nets, and fyke nets. The areas with the highest landings were the western Albemarle Sound and Chowan River.



At fish houses across coastal North Carolina, it is important to identify catfishes to the exact species whenever possible. There are trip ticket codes to record White, Channel, Blue, and Bullhead catfishes, but most landings are reported as unclassified catfishes. Division fish house sampling indicates that most of these unclassified catfishes are Blue Catfish.

Blue Catfish are native to the Mississippi River Basin and considered an invasive species in river basins that drain into the Atlantic Ocean. Blue Catfish were introduced into North Carolina and Virginia coastal rivers in the 1960s and 1970s.

Although they have been in North Carolina coastal waters for many years, recently the population has increased significantly. Blue Catfish are now the dominant catfish species in the Albemarle Sound and its tributaries, especially in the Chowan and Roanoke rivers.

Blue Catfish have a long life span, can exceed 120 pounds, and have an expansive diet that includes many native species that play an important role in North Carolina's ecosystems and economy, such as Blue Crab, Striped Bass, Atlantic Menhaden, River Herring, and American Shad. Once an invasive species like Blue Catfish has established a population, it can be difficult to eradicate. Instead, fisheries managers must focus on keeping their overall numbers as low as possible and containing their expansion to minimize the adverse impacts on native species. For this reason, the division encourages dealers to report landings using the specific area the catfishes are harvested instead of the general "Albemarle Sound" category, for example.

BLUE CRAB FMP AMENDMENT 3

The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission adopted Amendment 3 to the Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan in February 2020. Most management measures were implemented by proclamation and went into effect on May 1, 2020. Reductions in harvest of blue crab are required because the stock is overfished, and overfishing is occurring. These measures include setting a minimum 5-inch size limit on mature female hard blue crabs, no allowed harvest of immature female crabs, establishment and expansion of blue crab spawning sanctuaries, and gear restrictions. For a full list of changes in the Amendment, please visit: <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/blue-crab-topic>.

The Division of Marine Fisheries is dedicated to ensuring sustainable marine and estuarine fisheries and habitats for the benefit and health of the people of North Carolina.

2020 RULEBOOKS AVAILABLE ONLINE

The North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission Rules April 1, 2020 is now available online at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/rules-and-regulations>. The 2020 rulebook contains all current Marine Fisheries Commission rules, as well as select North Carolina general statutes and session laws. No new rule changes became effective April 1, 2020, but the document has been updated to reflect the most current rules and laws. For questions about the rulebook, please contact the Division Rulemaking Coordinator, Catherine Blum, at Catherine.Blum@ncdenr.gov or call 1-800-682-2632 or 252-726-7021.

TECH TIPS

If you are a seafood dealer, as well as a lease holder, and all of your lease landings only move through your dealership, you can print your Lease Production Reports from the Trip Ticket Software rather than having to calculate them by hand from personal trip tickets. Within the software main screen, select “Reports” in the toolbar. You can then select “Summary by Species” in the drop-down menu. A window will pop up for you to make selections specific to what you want to print in the report. Select the species of interest (ie, select “oyster” for an oyster Lease Production Report or “clam” for a clam Lease Production Report), “Last Year” as the pre-defined date range, the area where the leases occur, and check the “Private Leases” button. Once you click “Print”, a window will pop up with the summary report with any landings reported in your trip tickets within your leases, broken down by lease.

If you have any questions regarding the use of the Trip Ticket Software Program, please contact Brandi Salmon at Brandi.Salmon@ncdenr.gov or call 1-800-682-2632.

UPDATE ON SOCIOECONOMIC DEALER SURVEY

The Division of Marine Fisheries Economics Program completed its socioeconomic study of licensed seafood dealers in the state. Dealers were contacted by mail, email, and phone between October 2019 and February 2020 to discuss their business operations, finances, and perspectives on management. In all, about 200 dealers responded. This data will be compiled, and a report will be generated and available to the public early this summer. Please contact Division Economist David Dietz at David.Dietz@ncdenr.gov or call 919-707-8573, with any questions on this study.

LICENSE SALES

Below are sales, as of April 23, 2020, by license type for the 2019 license year (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020). The values below include active licenses only. Totals do not include transfers, replacements, or voids.

Standard Commercial Fishing License	3,867
Retired Standard Commercial Fishing License	1,295
Commercial Fishing Vessel Registration	6,414
Land or Sell License	132
License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean	157
NC Resident Shellfish License Without SCFL	564
Fish Dealer License	655
Ocean Pier License	20
Recreational Fishing Tournament License	22
Total Licenses for All License Types	13,126

REMINDERS

For seafood dealers submitting electronically, please remember to submit each month individually. This is particularly important when sending null reports. If you send a null report for one month and attach tickets for a second month, our system will not be able to separate the two months.

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The system will only recognize the month with tickets. Because of this issue, you could be seen as a non-reporter for the month that you had intended to send in a null report. Please ensure each month is sent separately from the previous month. For any questions or concerns please contact Brandi Salmon at Brandi.Salmon@ncdenr.gov or call 1-800-682-2632 or contact C.J. Schlick at cj.schlick@ncdenr.gov or 252-808-8095.

AUTOMATED EMAIL REMINDERS FOR TRIP TICKET SUBMISSIONS

In April 2020, the Division of Marine Fisheries started an automated email to all seafood dealers with valid emails on file. These emails are sent at 10 am on the first of each month to remind dealers that trip tickets are due on the tenth of each month. This is a voluntary program that you can participate in or opt out of at any point. If you would like to receive automated reminders, contact your port agent or Port Agent Supervisor CJ Schlick at cj.schlick@ncdenr.gov or call 252-808-8095 to provide your current email address.

SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF FINWEB

The Fisheries Information Network (FIN) is a database that is used for many of the division's programs, including the Trip Ticket and License Programs. FIN was first developed and deployed into production in July 1999 and a major upgrade to the system was launched in January 2020. The successful upgrade to the system converted FIN into a web-based platform. The use of more modern technologies provided enhancements to the data management process. However, extensive training and system analytics are ongoing with the upgrade, so please be patient with staff during this crucial transition to the new system.

UPDATE ON VESL DEVELOPMENT

The Trip Ticket Program continues to work with Bluefin Data, LLC and the North Carolina Department of Information Technology to implement VESL. VESL is a web-based version of the Trip Ticket Software Program that will allow use on any mobile devices with connection to Wi-Fi or cellular data, as well as any computers attached to the internet. The purpose is to allow for multiple computers to be used when submitting trip ticket data and to allow for greater flexibility with potential change in reporting requirements. Additionally, VESL will continue to maintain compliance with federal requirements, as the Trip Ticket Software currently does, to help reduce duplicate reporting burdens.

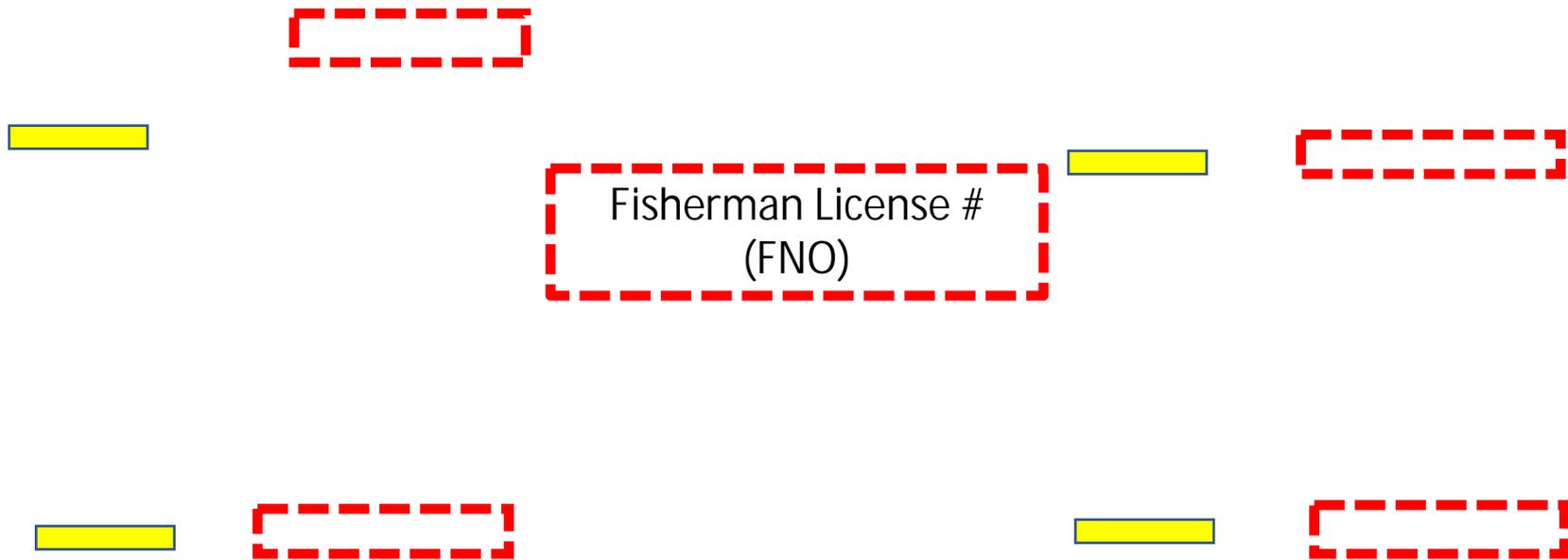
PORT AGENT CONTACTS

The Trip Ticket Program's commercial port agents act as liaisons between the Division of Marine Fisheries and the commercial fishing industry. If you have questions regarding rules, procedures, or requirements, please contact the nearest agent. If they are unable to answer your questions directly, they will refer you to someone who can.

Wilmington Pam Zuaboni (252) 241-0118 pam.zuaboni@ncdenr.gov	Morehead City Chuck Davis (252) 808-8029 chuck.davis@ncdenr.gov
Washington Jon Anglemyer (252) 948-3881 jon.anglemyer@ncdenr.gov	Manteo Marty Brill (252) 473-2158 martin.brill@ncdenr.gov
Elizabeth City Chris Kelly (252) 264-3911 chris.kelly@ncdenr.gov	

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Which numbers to use on Trip Tickets



**Please
do not use
Participant
ID (PID) for
P#**

REPORT CRAB KILLS

Why? Fishermen are often the first to see dead or dying crabs. Such events may occur due to weather or human-induced causes. Water quality conditions that can contribute to crab kills include low dissolved oxygen, rapid salinity change and elevated levels of pesticides in the water. Distress or mortality of peeler crabs in shedders can be an early sign of water quality problems. Rapid reporting of kills helps state agencies determine the cause and how to prevent them in the future.

What to look for: Blue crabs exposed to pesticides may exhibit unusual behavior, such as difficulty moving (flipping over, legs falling off) prior to dying. Crabs stressed by low oxygen or extreme changes in temperature or salinity are more likely to become inactive.



What to do: Immediately report crab or fish kills when observed at your shedder or on the water. Calls may be anonymous. When abnormal behavior is observed, freeze several crabs and collect water samples. Store the water sample in a clean jar or bag and keep cold.

Who to contact:

Weekdays: N.C. Department of Environmental Quality
Washington Office: 252-946-6481; 800-338-7804
Wilmington Office: 910-796-7215; 800-248-4536

Weekends/evening: **Environmental Emergency hotline: 800-858-0368**

