GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 442 Committee Substitute Favorable 4/29/25 Committee Substitute #2 Favorable 5/6/25

Short Title: Restore Flounder/Red Snapper Season. (Pub
Sponsors:
Referred to:
March 20, 2025
A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO RESTORE RECREATIONAL FISHING FOR FLOUNDER AND RISNAPPER IN NORTH CAROLINA THROUGH THE CREATION OF A FOUR-YEAR PILOT PROGRAM.
Whereas, in 2024, the Division of Marine Fisheries of the Department
Environmental Quality issued proclamations limiting the recreational harvest of flounder to for days in joint fishing waters and the recreational harvest of red snapper to one day; and Whereas, the recreational fishing industry contributes significantly to the economy coastal North Carolina; and
Whereas, North Carolina's restrictions on recreational fishing of flounder and a snapper are more stringent than any other Southeastern state from Virginia to Texas; and Whereas, there is considerable overlap in the fish population between southeaster counties of the State, such as Brunswick County, and South Carolina; and
Whereas, higher creel and season limits in South Carolina in 2024 gives that stat significant competitive advantage in the competition for recreational fishing tourism; and Whereas, state policies regarding recreational catch and release reporting and d analysis overestimate overall mortality, thus skewing the science on the flounder fishery; and
Whereas, coastal fishing charters or individual boats report catching large amounts these species by accident and having to release them, indicating the populations are plentiful; a Whereas, these unnecessarily strict and possibly unscientific restrictions on recreational fishing industry forces recreational fishing customers and captains to move much their business to South Carolina and Virginia; Now, therefore,
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts: SECTION 1 Directive Netwithstanding G.S. 113, 221, 1 and G.S. 143P, 280
SECTION 1. Directive. – Notwithstanding G.S. 113-221.1 and G.S. 143B-289 and any other provision of law to the contrary, the Fisheries Director (as defined G.S. 113-251), the Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission), and the Division of Mar Fisheries of the Department of Environmental Quality (Division) shall do all of the following
(1) Issue a proclamation and undertake a supplement to the Southern Flound
Fishery Management Plan to increase recreational and commercial access
the southern flounder resource by allowing a recreational harvest season
less than six weeks between May 15 and November 15 of each year with
limit of one fish per person per day, and no seasonal limit; and second commercial quota with a total allowed catch of 750,000 pounds with quoverages in one year deducted from the following year's quota and any unus
quota in one year added to the following year's quota. All other size a



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manner of take limits, season opening dates, area designations, and specific area and gear sub-allocations implemented through Amendment 3 to the Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan shall continue to apply.

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- (2) Allow a year-round red snapper season with a limit of two fish per person per day and a 20-inch minimum size limit in State waters.

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(3) By July 1, 2026, complete a southern flounder stock assessment based on the most recent years of available data.

SECTION 2. Report. – The Division shall report the results of the southern flounder stock assessment no later than August 1, 2026, to the chairs and members of the House Wildlife Resources Committee and the Senate Agriculture, Energy, and Environment Committee and shall annually report no later than August 1 thereafter with an assessment of progress in rebuilding the southern flounder stock and an estimated time line of further increasing recreational and commercial access to the southern flounder resource.

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SECTION 3. Effective Date; Expiration. – This act is effective when it becomes law and expires August 1, 2029.