

**COASTAL  
CONSERVATION  
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**House Bill 353  
The Coastal Game Fish Bill**



**Briefing Document**

**UNITED IN CONSERVATION**

# House Bill 353

## The Coastal Game Fish Bill

### *A summary of the financial, economic and conservation benefits*

House Bill 353 – Designation of Coastal Game Fish – is an act to designate red drum, spotted sea trout and striped bass as coastal game fish. It would prohibit the harvest of these species other than by hook-and-line and it would prohibit the sale of these species. House Bill 353 would also help foster a recreational fishery currently worth exponentially more in dollars and jobs than the commercial fishery and it would enhance a public trust resource for all citizens of North Carolina.

According to the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) the red drum is designated as “recovering” in stock status and the spotted sea trout is designated as “depleted.” The striped bass is not labeled but it’s likely that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will enact regulations requiring harvest reductions during 2011.

### **Recreational Dollars and Sense**

These three species are worth far more to North Carolina as a recreational resource than a commercial resource. The DMF collects data about recreational fishing in conjunction with the federal government’s Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). The impact of saltwater fishing trips on North Carolina’s economy for 2008 is shown in the table below.

### **Estimated Economic Impact of Saltwater Angling**

<b>Impact Type</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Labor Income</b>	<b>Total</b>
Direct Effect	\$943,929,472	12,424	\$295,284,352	\$548,552,704
Indirect Effect	\$319,250,048	2,434	\$105,912,752	\$176,979,968
Induced Effect	\$339,542,720	2,900	\$106,812,664	\$196,819,456
<b>Total Effect</b>	<b>\$1,602,722,304</b>	<b>17,758</b>	<b>\$508,009,760</b>	<b>\$922,353,664</b>

In short, recreational fishing was worth \$1.6 billion to the North Carolina economy and this number does not include durable goods that exceed \$1.2 billion.

In 2008, recreational fishermen in North Carolina took more than 500,000 fishing trips targeting spotted sea trout and spent approximately \$95,000,000 in trip and durable goods expenditures (NOAA: Office of Science and Technology). For red drum the numbers in 2006 were more than 500,000 trips and \$105,000,000 in expenditures (NCDMF 2008 FMP, pg. 36; and NOAA: MRFSS).

### **Other Numbers To Consider**

According to the National Marine Manufacturers Association's "2009 Recreational Boating Statistical Abstract:"

North Carolina ranked third in the U.S. in boat building.

- \$556,800,00 in sales
- 2903 employees
- 72 businesses

North Carolina ranked third in the U.S. in sales dollars for boats, boat engines, boat trailers and boat accessory manufacturers.

- \$2,172,500,000 in sales
- 8,909 employees
- 198 businesses

North Carolina ranked ninth in the U.S. in boating retail/service businesses.

- \$1,877,500,000 in sales
- 4,817 employees
- 983 businesses

This industry will likely benefit from the results of HB 353. Research has shown that improved abundance of fish has a positive effect on the sale of boats and boating accessories.

### **Commercial Quandary**

The numbers are simple and speak for themselves. In 2009, the three proposed game fish species COMBINED made up less than 2% of the total commercial harvest in this state. Out of this 2%, a significant number of these fish leave North Carolina to be sold and consumed in other states, many of which, have game fish protection for these species. Why should we overfish our resource so that other states can buy our fish while they protect their own? Fact: North Carolina accounts for approximately 90 percent of commercial red drum landings NATIONWIDE !

In regards to the number of commercial fishermen, the NC Division of Marine Fisheries reports that in 2010, there were 1,114 commercial participants that caught one or more of these species to sell. Out of those 1,114 participants, only 87 of them made more than \$2,000 off of the sale of these fish. So what does this really mean ?? It means that almost 70% of NC's commercial fishermen won't be affected in any way by the game fish legislation and a significant number of the fishermen that are affected are done so in a minimal way.

## **Fair and Equitable?**

- Recreational anglers are currently allowed to keep one (1) red drum between 18 and 27 inches in length per trip. Commercial fishermen are allowed 10 red drum per trip as “bycatch.” (NCDMF regulations).
- Recreational anglers currently cannot harvest speckled seatrout until June 15, 2011 due to cold weather winter kill. Commercial fishermen are still allowed a “bycatch” quota. (NCDMF regulations).
- A recreational angler is allowed to keep two (2) striped bass measuring 28 inches (minimum) from the ocean and zero (0) to three (3) fish inshore, depending on the area. A commercial fisherman is allowed to keep 2,000 pounds per trip, a recent change from 50 fish per trip. (NCDMF regulations).

### **Red Drum Facts**

- The channel bass (red drum) is the state fish of North Carolina
- Executive Order 13449 of October 20, 2007, issued by former U.S. President George W. Bush, designated the red drum as a protected game fish. The Order prohibits the sale of red drum caught in Federal waters and encourages states to consider designating red drum as a protected game fish within state waters.
- Recreational anglers in North Carolina release more than 85 percent of the red drum they catch. (NOAA: MRFSS).
- North Carolina accounts for approximately 90 percent of commercial red drum landings nationwide, but only 1 percent of recreational landings.

### **Spotted Seatrout Facts**

- Spotted seatrout have been over-fished from 1991 to 2008. (NCDMF 2010 Spotted Seatrout FMP).
- Based on the most recent 2009 NCDMF assessment, a 57 percent overall harvest reduction is required to end over fishing. The Marine Fisheries Commission has refused to take actions necessary to end overfishing of spotted seatrout and remains out of compliance with the law.
- Since 2005, North Carolina anglers have released 61 percent of recreationally caught spotted seatrout. (NMFS: Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey.)
- North Carolina accounts for about 70 percent of commercially caught spotted seatrout nationwide, but less than 5 percent of the recreational harvest.

### **Striped Bass Facts**

- Hybrid striped bass are “farmed” in North Carolina with great success. In 2008, 14 aquaculture operations produced 1,276,849 pounds of hybrid striped bass worth \$3,894,389. (N.C. State Aquaculture Extension).
- Striped bass stocks plummeted in the 1980s until fishing moratoriums were enacted in Virginia, Maryland and Delaware, which allowed stocks to recover.
- Earlier this year commercial fisherman in North Carolina killed and discarded thousands of legal-sized striped bass from their trawl nets.
- Striped bass harvest reductions are likely to occur in 2011.

### **You Decide**

House Bill 353 supporters are not insensitive to our commercial fishing heritage, nor do they want to put anybody out of work. Supporters of this bill simply want our public resources managed properly and in compliance with state fishery management plans.

HB 353 also creates jobs with no expense to the state at a time when job growth is a top priority. Recreational anglers release a significant percentage of the fish they catch to be caught again, and, to reproduce again. That’s what makes a resource sustainable and it’s just one more reason that HB 353 is a good bill for our resource AND for the people of North Carolina.