

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 442
Committee Substitute Favorable 4/29/25

Short Title: Restore Flounder/Red Snapper Season.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 20, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO RESTORE RECREATIONAL FISHING FOR FLOUNDER AND RED
SNAPPER IN NORTH CAROLINA THROUGH THE CREATION OF A FOUR-YEAR
PILOT PROGRAM.

Whereas, in 2024, the Division of Marine Fisheries of the Department of Environmental Quality issued proclamations limiting the recreational harvest of flounder to four 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 of coastal North Carolina; and

Whereas, North Carolina's restrictions on recreational fishing of flounder and red snapper are more stringent than any other Southeastern state from Virginia to Texas; and

Whereas, there is considerable overlap in the fish population between southeastern 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 state a significant competitive advantage in the competition for recreational fishing tourism; and

Whereas, state policies regarding recreational catch and release reporting and data analysis overestimate overall mortality, thus skewing the science on the flounder fishery; and

Whereas, coastal fishing charters or individual boats report catching large amounts of these species by accident and having to release them, indicating the populations are plentiful; and

Whereas, these unnecessarily strict and possibly unscientific restrictions on the recreational fishing industry forces recreational fishing customers and captains to move much of their business to South Carolina and Virginia; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Directive. – Notwithstanding G.S. 113-221.1 and G.S. 143B-289.52 and any other provision of law to the contrary, the Fisheries Director (as defined in G.S. 113-251), the Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission), and the Division of Marine Fisheries of the Department of Environmental Quality (Division) shall do all of the following:

- (1) Issue proclamations and undertake amendments to the fishery management plan for flounder and red snapper in order to allow a recreational season between May 15 and November 15 of each year, with a limit of one fish or more per person per day, and no seasonal limit. All other size and manner of take limits shall continue to apply to the flounder and red snapper fisheries.
- (2) Revise any regulations, guidelines, or policies regarding the catch and release fishery so that flounder and red snapper caught and released by recreational fishermen will not be counted towards catch limits or quotas set by the Division or the Commission.



1 **SECTION 2.** Report. – The Division shall annually report no later than August 1 to
2 the chairs and members of the House Wildlife Resources Committee and the Senate Agriculture,
3 Energy, and Environment Committee. The report will include an assessment of progress in
4 conserving flounder and red snapper populations and an estimate of the time line for the Division
5 to be able to increase the daily creel limit above one fish per day for the red snapper and flounder
6 fisheries.

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