

# ACCOUNTING FOR THE BOUNTY OF THE SEA

*For several years, Scott Baker, North Carolina Sea Grant fisheries specialist, has given an update on the recreational and commercial fishing industries at the North Carolina Catch Summit and other venues. He outlines highlights of both industries, adding interesting facts about the state's fisheries. Baker worked with Sea Grant communicators Diana Hackenburg and E-Ching Lee on this series of infographics to share the most recent data from the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries.*

**W**hen it comes to seafood, North Carolina commercial fisheries provide lots of local options for our plates. And recreational anglers bring more choices to their own tables. Here, we share some interesting numbers to give you a little food for thought.

In 2015, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries data show the commercial fishing industry was valued at \$104 million, landing 66 million pounds of fish. The recreational industry caught 11.6 million pounds, or 10.2 million fish. Both sectors increased from 2014 totals.

In the top 10 seafoods consumed in the United States as determined by the National Fisheries Institute, a U.S. seafood trade association, there are five species — shrimp, tilapia, catfish, crab and clams — either caught or grown in North Carolina.

However, up to 90 percent of seafood consumed in the United States is imported, according to [www.fishwatch.gov](http://www.fishwatch.gov), which is maintained by the National Marine Fisheries Service in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. About half of the imported seafood is wild-caught.

According to data from NMFS, North Carolina sits in the middle of the pack for the volume and value of seafood it lands.

In terms of pounds, North Carolina came in 15th out of 30 states nationwide that reported commercial landings in 2014 according to NMFS. Our state was 13th in dollar value of the seafood.

In the same year, North Carolina ranked sixth in pounds landed and

fifth for the value of that catch out of the 15 Atlantic Coast states with commercial fisheries.

NOAA also noted that North Carolina commercial fishermen landed the most diverse array of seafood along the East Coast in 2014.

The recreational industry tells the tale of two fisheries.

The smaller inshore and nearshore species comprise the most numbers of fish. However, the offshore species landed by larger boats farther from shore collectively combine for the most weight.

Consider wahoo and yellowfin tuna, both in the top five species caught by weight. Wahoo and yellowfin, which are found offshore, can weigh as much as 150 and 400 pounds, respectively. Compare this with the top five species by number — kingfish, pufferfish, spot, bluefish and pigfish — that are caught closer to shore and typically weigh less than 10 pounds per fish.

Bluefish, caught anywhere from the sounds to the nearshore reefs past the inlets, makes the top five in both pounds and number of fish landed.

For some species — such as dolphinfish, also known as mahi mahi, and spotted sea trout — recreational anglers bring back more than commercial fishermen.

Perhaps the data about North Carolina's fisheries in the following pages will give you something to discuss over your next local seafood dinner.

# NORTH CAROLINA COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



## TOTAL HARVESTED IN 2015

**\$104 million**  
Value +10.7%

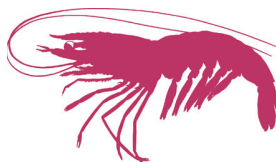
**66 million lbs.**  
Landings +6.8%

### Top 5 Species by Value % Changes from 2014



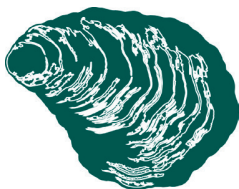
Hard Blue Crabs

**\$29.5 million**  
31 million lbs. -1.6%



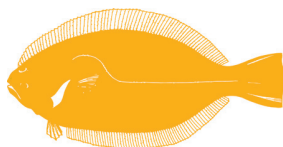
Shrimp,  
Heads on

**\$16.8 million**  
9 million lbs. +19%



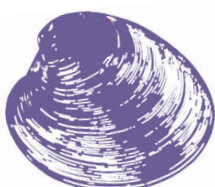
Oysters, Meats

**\$13.8 million**  
0.6 million lbs. +203%



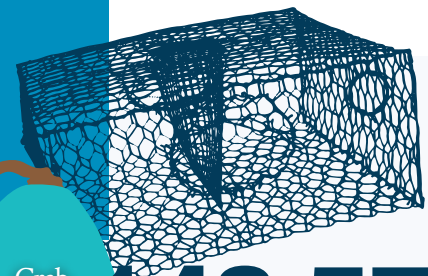
Summer  
Flounder

**\$9 million**  
2.8 million lbs. +10%



Hard Clams, Meats

**\$5 million**  
0.4 million lbs. +75%



Crab  
Pot

**142,572**  
total trips

Gill Net,  
anchored

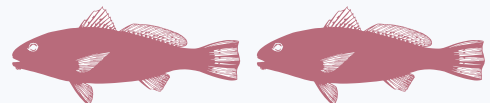
By Hand

Rakes

Shrimp Trawl

**Top 5 Gears  
by # of Trips**

### Other Top Fisheries



Atlantic Croaker

**#5** by pounds harvested

**#10** by value



Spiny Dogfish

**#3** by pounds harvested

**#22** by value

Data source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries Annual Fisheries Bulletin, 2015. All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousandth.

# NORTH CAROLINA RECREATIONAL FISHERIES



TOTAL HARVESTED IN 2015

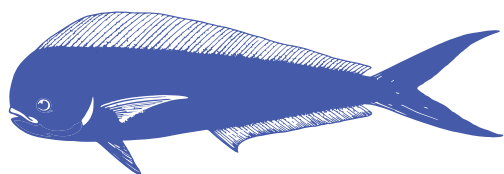
**11.6 million lbs.**

Landings **+32%**

**10.2 million**

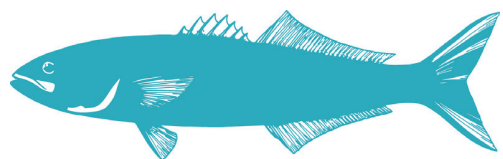
Number of Fish **+6.8%**

## Top 5 Species by Weight % Changes from 2014



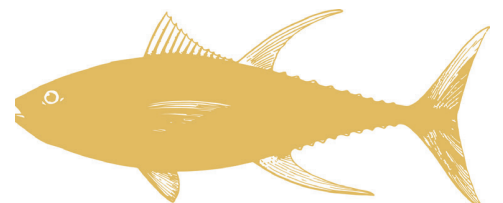
Mahi mahi (Dolphinfish)

**3.1 million lbs.**  
430,000 fish **+137%**



Bluefish

**769,000 lbs.**  
912,000 fish **-20%**



Yellowfin Tuna

**723,000 lbs.**  
24,306 fish **-17%**



For every fish landed,  
about two are released.



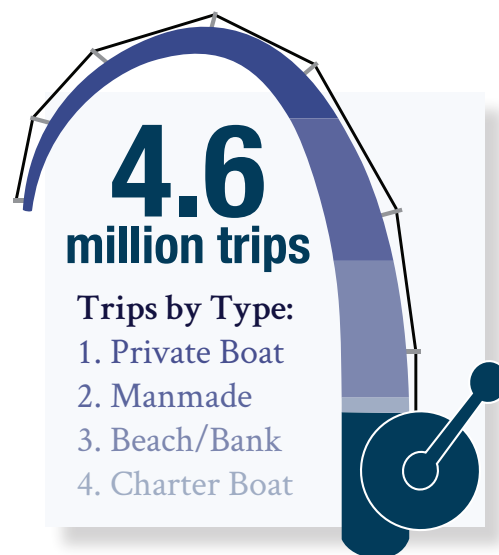
Cobia

**676,000 lbs.**  
16,000 fish **+173%**



Wahoo

**535,000 lbs.**  
19,000 fish **+66%**



Data source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries Annual Fisheries Bulletin, 2015. All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousandth.

# NORTH CAROLINA SEASONAL SEAFOOD: AUTUMN

Sustainable harvests mean we will enjoy seafood today and in the future. North Carolina fisheries listed here are managed for long-term viability. For more information on eating local seafood, visit [ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/seafood](http://ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/seafood).

**Stock Status:** **V** Viable **C** Concern Other categories: Depleted, Recovering, Unknown

For category definitions, visit [portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/stock-status-categories-and-definitions](http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/stock-status-categories-and-definitions).

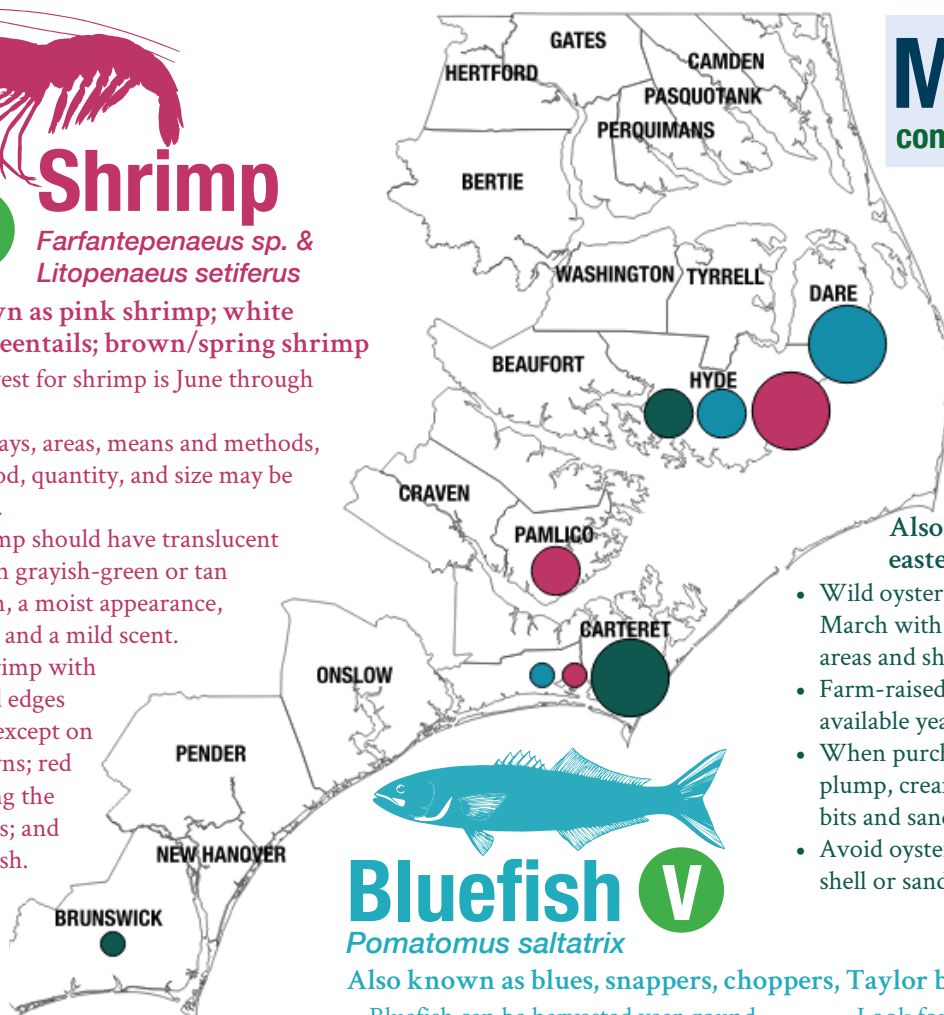


## Shrimp

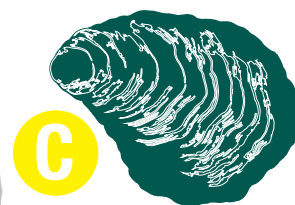
*Farfantepenaeus sp. & Litopenaeus setiferus*

Also known as pink shrimp; white shrimp/greentails; brown/spring shrimp

- Peak harvest for shrimp is June through October.
- Harvest days, areas, means and methods, time period, quantity, and size may be restricted.
- Raw shrimp should have translucent shells with grayish-green or tan coloration, a moist appearance, firm flesh and a mild scent.
- Avoid shrimp with blackened edges or spots, except on spot prawns; red color along the shell edges; and mushy flesh.



**MAP:** Top 3 counties per species for commercial landings in 2015.



## Oysters

*Crassostrea virginica*

Also known as Atlantic, American, eastern, common or Virginia oyster

- Wild oysters are harvested from October to March with tongs, rakes or by hand in intertidal areas and shallow water along the coast.
- Farm-raised oysters are a good choice and available year-round.
- When purchasing shucked oysters, look for plump, cream-colored meat that is free of shell bits and sand, and has a mild scent.
- Avoid oysters with shriveled, dark, dry meat; shell or sand; and cloudy liquid.



## Bluefish

*Pomatomus saltatrix*



Also known as blues, snappers, choppers, Taylor blues

- Bluefish can be harvested year-round, but the commercial season closes when, and if, the quota is met.
- Bluefish is a tender-fleshed fish, high in omega-3 fatty acids, that is best eaten fresh, or smoked to extend shelf life.
- Look for fresh-cut fish with firm, elastic flesh; translucent color; a moist appearance; mild scent; and unexpired sell-by date.
- Avoid fish with mushy or bruised flesh, a milky color and dry or brown edges.

**TIP:** When buying seafood, avoid products with a strong sour or "fishy" odor.

## North Carolina Availability

Based on N.C. DMF commercial landing data from 2009 to 2013.

