

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 442

Short Title: Restore Flounder/Red Snapper Season. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Iler, Goodwin, Davis, and Kidwell (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Wildlife Resources, if favorable, State and Local Government, if favorable, Rules,
Calendar, and Operations of the House

March 20, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO RESTORE RECREATIONAL FISHING FOR SUMMER 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 summer
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 summer 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 summer 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 summer flounder and red snapper in order to allow a recreational
season between May 15 and July 31 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



1 take limits shall continue to apply to the summer flounder and red snapper
2 fisheries.

- 3 (2) Revise any regulations, guidelines, or policies regarding the catch and release
4 fishery so that flounder and red snapper caught and released by recreational
5 fishermen will not be counted towards catch limits or quotas set by the
6 Division or the Commission.

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

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