

NC Inshore Gillnet Fishery

Fishing gear type: Gillnet

Current category: Category II*

Basis for current classification on the LOF: The total annual mortality and serious injury of bottlenose dolphin (Western North Atlantic [WNA] coastal stock) in this fishery is greater than 1% and less than 50% of the stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level.

Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed (a ⁽¹⁾ indicates those stocks driving the fishery's classification): Bottlenose dolphin, WNA coastal ⁽¹⁾.

Current estimated number of participants: 94

Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery: Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Plan (BDTRP), 50 CFR 229.35.

Year added to the LOF: 1996

Category when originally listed: Category III

Basis for original classification on the LOF: All marine mammal strandings exhibiting evidence of gillnet fishery interactions recovered by the North Carolina marine mammal stranding network since at least 1992 were from offshore locations. However, as marine mammals stranded in the marshes are difficult to detect, stranding data will reflect this bias. NMFS stated that there was a potential for interaction with bottlenose dolphins, and therefore, would continue to collect information on this fishery.

Estimated number of participants when originally listed: 94

Past names, if any: None.

Gear description/method for fishing: This fishery includes any fishing effort using any type of gillnet gear, including set (float and sink), drift, and runaround gillnet.

Target species: Target species include, but are not limited to: southern flounder, weakfish, bluefish, Atlantic croaker, striped mullet, spotted seatrout, Spanish mackerel, striped bass, spot, red drum, black drum, and shad.

Spatial/temporal distribution of effort: This fishery includes any gillnet effort for any target species inshore of the COLREGS demarcation lines in North Carolina (COLREGS demarcation lines delineate those waters upon which mariners shall comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea and those waters upon which mariners shall comply with the Inland Navigation Rules).

Levels of observer coverage each year[†]: Observer coverage, up to 10% in some cases, is provided by the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, primarily during the fall flounder fishery in Pamlico Sound. The Northeast Fishery Observer Program has observed the fishery at low levels, as well as the North Carolina Alternative Platform Observer Program.

* The fishery is classified based on mortalities and serious injuries of a marine mammal stock greater than 1% and less than 50% (Category II) of the stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level.

[†] Observer coverage levels include the latest information reported in the most current final Stock Assessment Report (SAR).

Management and regulations: This fishery is managed under state and Interstate Fishery Management Plans, applying net and mesh size regulations, and seasonal area closures in the Pamlico Sound Gillnet Restricted Area. It is an affected fishery under the BDTRP.

History of Changes on the LOF

2006 LOF: Added a superscript “1” in Table 2 after bottlenose dolphin (WNA coastal), indicating that this stock was driving the categorization of the fishery.

2001 LOF: Elevated from a Category III to a Category II based on a GIS analysis of fishery interaction data from bottlenose dolphin (WNA coastal) strandings in North Carolina. Analysis revealed 12 fishery interaction-related strandings in inshore waters. Counting only 2 of the 12 animals for which the strandings were clearly attributable to gillnet interactions, this fishery takes a minimum 0.4 animals/year, which was 1.6% of PBR (PBR=25).

1999 LOF:

- Added this fishery to the current mid-Atlantic coastal gillnet fishery observer program to gain more conclusive information for potential reclassification of the fishery on future LOFs.
- Bottlenose dolphin (WNA coastal) added to list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery based on 1 stranded bottlenose dolphin and 2 bottlenose dolphins disentangled and released from inshore waters.