

Public Reporting

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council



Public Comment Form

Amendment

Executive Order 14276 Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness

On April 17, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14276: Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, aimed at eliminating unfair trade practices, promoting ethical sourcing, and strengthening the integrity of the seafood supply chain. Public comments can be submitted online from July 28, 2025, through August 15, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

| Submit Date | Submitted By | Location | Affiliation | Comment |
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| 7/29/2025 | First Name: William Last Name: Crawford Email: Crawfishcharters@gmail.com | City: Fernandina Beach State: Florida | Commercial, For-Hire | Turn the management of our east coast fishery in federal waters over to the states. We have a horrible imbalance of sharks and red snapper that have taken over our reefs that is a direct result of mismanagement. The shark population is out of control! |
| 8/7/2025 | First Name: Chris Last Name: McCaffity Email: freefish7@hotmail.com | City: Morehead City State: North Carolina | Commercial | Please consider options for using regional hatcheries to stock a wide variety of native seafood hatchlings that live wild and free as natural selection ensures survival of the fittest. This sustainable solution can help maintain abundance and harvest levels at historically high levels to support more recreational and commercial opportunities. Public Water aquaculture should be limited to stocking natural seafood for everyone to enjoy rather than letting global corporations use our waters to cage large concentrations of genetically modified species that negatively impact traditional fisheries by spreading pollution, parasites, and disease to surrounding ecosystems. Artificial reefs are another option for enhancing our fisheries and food supply. It is time to make fishing fun again by focusing more on enhancement than enforcement. I am happy to answer any questions and/or provide more detail. |
| 8/7/2025 | First Name: Albie Last Name: Solana Email: albiesol@gmail.com | City: Sneads Ferry State: North Carolina | Commercial | My name is Capt. Albie Solana and I am the Owner/Operator of the F/V Orion out of Wrightsville Beach, NC. I have a SG-1 permit and do multi-day trips harvesting our catch diving and with bandit reels. There are several changes that would drastically increase my efficiency and productivity - 1. Add additional weights to the trip limits for multi-day trips (such as 75lbs of Gag for every additional day at sea) 2. Create a reasonable commercial lobster season from GA-NC (instead of 2 per person make it 10-20 per trip). 3. Allow a limit of closed season species (50lbs of ARS or 75lbs of Gag when closed) 4. Open up a season for Sand Bars and other Sharks to keep the population in check, reduce competition with fishermen for fish, and reduce loss of catch to depredation. 5. Immediately put into effect the suggested 2026 ARS season, ACL, and 150lb trip limit. The current trip limits really promote day boat fishing and excess fuel consumption while putting multi-day vessels at a disadvantage. I already call NCDMF to report my trips for the daily NC Hogfish limits and feel like similar measures can be used for species such as Gags and ARS to increase production and efficiency. |
| 8/7/2025 | First Name: Patrick Last Name: Stone Email: Patstone1964@gmail.com | City: Cape canaveral State: Florida | Commercial | Do something with the reef permits that will put them in the hands of people that will use them. They have to be made affordable for commercial fishermen. Get rid of the two for one requirement. There is no way a guy can afford a permit and ever expect to recoup a \$100,000 investment. Put the permits in fisherman's hands not riding around on shrimp boats or assigned to a recreational boat that wants to recover his cost of a fishing trip. Restrict permit numbers of people brokering permits and creating a market to lease them or buy them with a middle man mark up. |

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| 8/14/2025 | <p>First Name: Jason Last Name: Oakes Email: BOTTOMDOLLAR. JOAKES@GMAIL.COM</p> | <p>City: Roxboro State: North Carolina</p> | <p>Private Recreational, Commercial, Wholesale/Dealer /Retail</p> | <p>Dear South Atlantic Fishery Management Council,</p> <p>As a commercial fisherman operating in the South Atlantic with a Snapper Grouper unlimited permit, Atlantic Dolphin Wahoo, and Tunas General permits, I submit this comment in response to Executive Order 14276, "Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness." The executive order explicitly mandates the reduction of regulatory burdens to enhance the competitiveness of the American seafood industry. It emphasizes increased accountability for governing agencies, not stakeholders. My comments align with this directive, focusing on removing existing barriers to improve productivity and economic viability for small-scale fishermen like myself, while avoiding new regulations or unrelated SAFMC priorities.</p> <p>Reducing Burdens and Increasing Productivity</p> <p>Vision for a Strong and Competitive American Seafood Industry A competitive seafood industry, as envisioned by Executive Order 14276, would enable small-scale fishermen to operate efficiently without excessive regulatory costs or restrictive measures that limit access to abundant fish stocks. It would prioritize fair market access, reduce financial burdens from compliance, and leverage modern technology to ensure accurate data collection without disrupting fishing operations. For my operation, this means fewer costly mandates and greater flexibility to target species like gag grouper and American Red Snapper (ARS) when they are present, as confirmed by on-the-water observations. The order's directive is to reduce regulations, not create new ones or pursue SAFMC's unrelated priorities.</p> <p>Specific Challenges in the South Atlantic Region The South Atlantic region, spanning a vast area with multiple ecosystem zones, exhibits significant variability in species abundance across sub-regions. For example, red grouper populations are robust near or south of Cape Fear but appear strained north of this area. Similarly, while I lack direct experience in central Florida, anecdotal reports suggest American Red Snapper may be struggling there, yet they are thriving in the Cape Lookout zone. Years of observer program data likely document these regional differences, highlighting the need for localized management approaches tailored to the diverse ecosystems within the SAFMC's jurisdiction.</p> <p>Fishery Management Measures Hurting Participation I do not believe there is a participation issue in South Atlantic fisheries.</p> <p>Modifying Regulations for Small-Scale Fishermen Regulations should be streamlined to reduce compliance costs and enhance access for small-scale fishermen, as mandated by Executive Order 14276. Implementing overlapping quota periods for American Red Snapper and gag grouper in May–June and October–December will support economic viability for day boat fishermen targeting shallow water grouper complex species. SAFMC must focus on burden reduction, and increasing trip efficiency / profitability not advancing unrelated priorities.</p> <p>Management Measures for Competitiveness Without Compromising Sustainability Implementing overlapping quota periods for American Red Snapper and gag grouper in May–June and October–December, when these species are abundant in shallow waters, would enable more economical fishing trips when targeting shallow-water reef species. While some ARS and gag may be caught during deeper-water fishing for species like silk snapper or trigger fish, the volume is significantly lower compared to using "grouper bait" in shallower waters. This adjustment would enhance profitability by aligning quotas with peak abundance periods, supporting sustainable harvest levels without compromising conservation.</p> <p>Innovative Science and Management</p> <p>Balancing Environmental Protection and Economic Growth The SAFMC should prioritize technology-driven data collection, such as underwater drones, to balance environmental protection with economic growth, as mandated by the executive order's call for modernized management. Drones offer real-time, maneuverable observation of fish stocks, unlike outdated catch-based methods that often misrepresent abundance due to variable fish behavior. This supports conservation while enabling access to viable fisheries.</p> <p>Regulations to Retain or Reconsider The Magnuson-Stevens Act's implementation should be reviewed against current data to ensure alignment with actual stock conditions. Excessive life raft inspection requirements must be reconsidered to align with the order's directive to reduce burdens. Conducted by private companies at high cost, these inspections raise concerns about cost-effectiveness and potential special interest influence in their frequent scheduling. SAFMC should recommend that the U.S. Coast Guard review these requirements for cost-effectiveness and consider conducting inspections directly, rather than relying on private contractors. The executive order emphasizes agency accountability to address such burdens, not increasing stakeholder obligations.</p> <p>Parts of the Seafood Industry to Consider Management should focus on the financial burdens faced by small-scale fishermen, who lack the resources of larger operations to absorb compliance costs. Processors and distributors benefit from increased catch, but fishermen bear the brunt of regulatory costs. Imported seafood should be labeled as such, and all seafood should have full traceability. The data and systems for traceability, already implemented for shellfish like clams and oysters, should be extended to all seafood.</p> <p>Improving Policies and Permitting Processes The online permitting renewal process functions very well and should be maintained. The existing 2-for-1 licensing program should remain, with consideration for a one-time transfer of individually owned permits to an entity name to enhance operational flexibility without devaluing permits. Proposals to restrict permits based on usage or to eliminate "part-time" fishermen are unjustified, as compliant permits are the owner's prerogative. Such restrictions are not applied in other industries, and targeting part-time fishermen undermines their economic investments, including permit value relied upon for financial security and income from part-time fishing. The SAFMC should focus on streamlining processes, not advancing unrelated priorities, as directed by the executive order.</p> <p>Scientific Research and Data Contribution</p> |
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| 8/26/2025 | First Name: Jeff Last Name: Oden Email: slshcrktrwks@aol.com | City: Hatteras State: North Carolina | Commercial | <p>Thanks for the opportunity to comment on making America's seafood competitive AGAIN! The bottom line if this is just a total in house review, then this is a total waste of both mine and your time since i have already commented to this council on this topic via A60.</p> <p>But if somehow someone outside this council is reviewing this, then my question to you is HOW has a provision that has allowed a overriding bias within a National Council process been allowed to decimate a fishing industry to the point that it is at present a little over 10% of it's original capacity? And this has all been perpetuated over the last 27 years via and amendment titled (2/1) whereby a new entrant into the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery had to buy 2 permits at considerable cost (\$40.000 to \$50.000 apiece) and retire one which has taken and industry down from over 2000 permits back in 1998 to one that was recently divulged via the observer program was but a mere 272 active fishermen left to feed this nation.</p> <p>Furthermore, over 20 years ago when i was on the South Atlantic advisory panel on snapper grouper.... it was divulged that our industry at that time was comprised of 90%50 year olds. Fast forward to today and many of us are in our 70's and counting. Out of my inlet of Hatteras, and area that at one time had 15 plus boats there are now just 6 actual permits.....not counting of course a few rec' anglers that bought" unlimited" permits just to have more fun.....! That is where our industry is essentially heading, either being over run by the unlimited for hire industry, aging out and dying off or being bought out by those with means thereby depriving America of a Public Trust resource.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the OVER RIDING bias ingrained in this council process via the recreational community which by the way represents about 15% of this country (the fishing public), has been allowed to relegate our industry on the brink and the American consumer (85% of the non fishing public) the LOSER!!!</p> <p>Furthermore, those of us that still participate in industry find that what should be sacred.....or OUR QUOTA's.....are routinely used to cover for recreational overages, thereby leaving industry with minuscule trip limits that aren't worth in some cases going out of your way to pursue. A case in point is red snapper, a fishery that is deemed 28% commercial and leaves a boat with a 75 lb trip limit. Meanwhile the unfortunate reality is industry is relegated to around 5% of this fishery since it has to pay the bills for the recreational communities discard mortality problem.</p> <p>Also last season industry was shut down early on snowie quite obviously to cover for the recreational industry that went over its ACL by 274%.....yet still managed a 5 week season this year.....a courtesy that "WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN EXTENDED TO INDUSTRY". The bottom line is, our industry can't be made to pay the bills for the "UNACCOUNTABLE" and survive!</p> <p>So finally, if there is truly someone outside of this council process that is actually listening and empathetic of industries plight, here is your chance to simply "Make America's SG Industry Survivable Again". Otherwise i am just singing to the choir.....and the unfortunate reality is they DON'T WANT the few of us left to be more than a token acknowledgment! Jeff Oden</p> |
| 8/28/2025 | First Name: Paul Last Name: Rudershausen Email: prudershausen@hotmail.com | City: State: North Carolina | Other | <p>The commercial fishing industry is often at the forefront of ideas to 'build the better mousetrap' to reduce at-sea waste and optimize fishery harvests. As a scientist, I have worked cooperatively with them in applied research projects to test and demonstrate the effectiveness of devices that will, for example, reduce unwanted or unmarketable bycatch or increase post-release survival of sub-legal fish to allow them to mature and reach legally harvestable sizes where they often command higher market values. Thus, it is a paradox that the 2025 EO on seafood competitiveness states that "the Secretary of Commerce shall direct NMFS to incorporate cooperative research programs into fishery assessments" at the same time the federal government is slashing programs such as the NOAA Fisheries Cooperative Research Program ("CRP"), a once vibrant research avenue that teamed research scientists with fishing industry representatives to provide scientific results that ultimately improve assessment of stock status and fisheries management. And it is my understanding that many additional sources of federal cooperative research money have been similarly eliminated or are slated for elimination, either through cuts to federally administered programs or through the elimination of agencies that identify regional fisheries research needs and administer grant programs to address these needs. Restoring and enhancing funding to these federal programs and the agencies that support them would help team up researchers up with the very fishing industry that the EO appears intent on supporting, all while letting the industry test solutions that could help optimize yields.</p> <p>In an era where we know within the single digits how many people vote in any given election, the federal government in contrast still resorts to eloquent guesswork as to how many recreational anglers fish in the US EEZ, what they are catching and discarding, and how much they harvest. And there are only loose estimates of levels of compliance by the recreational industry to federal fisheries laws, many which are intended to address issues raised in the EO (e.g., reducing waste and optimizing yields). All this is to say that quantifying private boat recreational angling remains particularly challenging, and this is a fishing sector and mode whose effort, catch, and harvest remain only weakly estimated despite the importance of these estimates for assessment and management. Estimates of key stock metrics like abundance and fishing mortality suffer from such poor data, and management lacks guidance it would otherwise be afforded with a better quantitative understanding of EEZ regional recreational fisheries. The EO's intent is ultimately to optimize yield of federally managed fish stocks (BTW something the Magnuson Stevens Act already theoretically does) yet yield targets (e.g., MSY) cannot be accurately estimated and managed when exploitation by the recreational fishing sector remains largely guesswork in the federal EEZ. The EO striving to optimize yield of federally managed fish stocks is also at odds with the administration's aggressive elimination of NOAA employees who could help tackle the ongoing problem surrounding uncertainties in quantifying the impacts to federal fish stock health by a growing population of recreational anglers (especially here in the southeastern US). I am a recreational angler myself, despite having fished hundreds of times in the EEZ over 40 years of my life, public agencies haven't once checked my cooler or sampled my catch. One can rightly question, in the absence of routine monitoring, whether the previous EO on this topic (May 7, 2020) did anything to 'improve data collection,' as the present EO contends that it did. This begs the question: was the effectiveness of the previous (2020) EO formally evaluated, and were lessons learned, before the current (2025) EO was rolled out?</p> <p>No fault of theirs, the American public generally doesn't have a clue what restaurant seafood they are truly consuming. Requiring country of origin labeling ("COOL" for restaurant seafood products would allow American restaurant patrons to make informed meal choices and ultimately enhance the competitiveness of domestic seafood production, given that US consumers are apt to support domestically sourced products over oftentimes unregulated and unsustainably produced imports. Relatedly, monitoring and enforcing COOL and species ID requirements for seafood products sold in retail markets and grocers in the US would provide the American seafood consumer with information for them to make the most informed decisions for their budgets and consciences.</p> <p>Finally, if the presidential administration is serious about 'restoring American seafood competitiveness,' it would address the disappearance of working waterfront that financially cripples seafood harvesters on both coasts of country. At the same time that commercial fishing access to waterfront is declining, the expense of accessing it is rising. The United States has a rich fishing heritage that for centuries has supplied a vital source of protein in the form of seafood harvested from the EEZ. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, no federal programs exist to preserve this working waterfront to allow perpetual access by the commercial industry to continue harvests of valuable seafood products. Initiating a federal program to preserve working waterfront, with a rationale rooted in either heritage or food security (or both) (among other factors), would be a good place to start to address this competitiveness issue that the EO raises, and ultimately enhance the competitiveness of domestic seafood production in a global economy.</p> |

