

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2019

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HOUSE BILL 483  
Committee Substitute Favorable 4/16/19  
Committee Substitute #2 Favorable 6/18/19

Short Title: Let Them Spawn.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 28, 2019

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO REQUIRE A MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT FOR EVERY COMMERCIALY AND  
3 RECREATIONALLY IMPORTANT SPECIES OF MARINE FISH TO ENSURE THAT  
4 SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE JUVENILE FISH OF EACH SPECIES WILL HAVE  
5 AN OPPORTUNITY TO REACH MATURITY AND SPAWN AT LEAST ONCE.

6 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

7 **SECTION 1.** G.S. 113-182.1(b) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

8 "(8) Include a minimum size limit for every species of marine fish that has  
9 contributed historically and significantly to the fisheries of North Carolina,  
10 including spot (*Leiostomus xanthurus*), Atlantic croaker (*Micropogonias*  
11 *undulatus*), kingfishes (*Menticirrhus ssp.*), striped mullet (*Mugil cephalus*),  
12 southern flounder (*Paralichthys lethostigma*), and bluefish (*Pomatomus*  
13 *saltatrix*), to ensure that seventy-five percent (75%) of the juvenile fish at the  
14 minimum size limit established for the species will reach the size of maturity  
15 and will have an opportunity to spawn at least once. The minimum size limit  
16 required by this subdivision shall be based on the best available biological and  
17 life history data for each species. In the event data for a particular species is  
18 unavailable for North Carolina, the Commission shall utilize data from other  
19 Atlantic coast states until studies specific to North Carolina can be completed.  
20 This subdivision shall not apply if the Fisheries Director determines that the  
21 species under consideration has a unique life cycle and maturity characteristic  
22 that makes the minimum size limit required by this subdivision inappropriate  
23 based on generally accepted fishery management protocols. If the Fisheries  
24 Director determines that the minimum size limit required by this subdivision  
25 is inappropriate, the Fisheries Director shall instead propose slot limits to  
26 protect the adult spawning stock."

27 **SECTION 2.** Rule Making. – The Marine Fisheries Commission shall adopt rules to  
28 implement G.S. 113-182.1(b)(8), as enacted by Section 1 of this act.

29 **SECTION 3.** Temporary Management Measures. – Until Fishery Management Plans  
30 are adopted that include the minimum size limits required by this act, the Director of the Division  
31 of Marine Fisheries and the Marine Fisheries Commission shall develop and adopt temporary  
32 management measures as provided in this section. The Director shall review the biological and  
33 life history data currently available for every species of marine fish that has contributed  
34 historically and significantly to the fisheries of North Carolina, including spot (*Leiostomus*  
35 *xanthurus*), Atlantic croaker (*Micropogonias undulatus*), kingfishes (*Menticirrhus ssp.*), striped



1 mullet (*Mugil cephalus*), southern flounder (*Paralichthys lethostigma*), and bluefish (*Pomatomus*  
2 *saltatrix*). No later than December 1, 2019, the Director shall present the findings of this review  
3 to the Commission. Based on these findings, the Commission shall adopt temporary management  
4 measures that establish minimum size limits to ensure that seventy-five percent (75%) of the  
5 juvenile fish at the minimum size limit established for each species will reach the size of maturity  
6 and will have an opportunity to spawn at least once.

7 **SECTION 4.** Ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) of the funds appropriated to the  
8 Division of North Carolina Aquariums in the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural  
9 Resources by Section 14.19 of S.L. 2017-57, as amended by Section 4.3 of S.L. 2017-197 and  
10 Section 4.9 of S.L. 2017-212, and allocated for planning and permitting of a satellite aquarium  
11 area, shall instead be used to implement this act.

12 **SECTION 5.** This act is effective when it becomes law and applies to Fishery  
13 Management Plans developed prior to that date and Fishery Management Plans developed on or  
14 after that date.