



**The Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce**

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March 23, 2011

The Honorable Daniel McComas  
Chairman  
Committee on Commerce and Job Development

re: HB353 – Designation of Coastal Game Fish

On behalf of the more than 1,000 members of the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce in Dare, Currituck and Hyde Counties, I am writing to express the Chamber's opposition to HB353 "Designation of Coastal Game Fish" which seeks to designate the red drum, spotted sea trout and striped bass as game fish thus halting the commercial fishing and sale of these species to the public at seafood markets and through restaurants.

Although 2010 dockside statistics have not been posted, the average annual dockside value of these three species is about \$1.6 million and most of that is landed in Dare and Hyde counties. This translates into about \$6 million a year in receipts at restaurants and fish markets - a substantial portion of that in Dare County.

The recreation statistics show that the recreational catch is several times that of commercial fishermen and there is no scientific basis for making these species game fish. These fish are a public trust resource and giving them game fish status and prohibiting sale of them means that only those who choose or have the means to go hook and line fishing will have access to the resource. Fishermen aren't selling their catch, they are charging for catching and delivering them to the public which owns them.

The bill states that the commercial fishermen will be paid the equivalent of their average income from the sale of these species over the period 2008 through 2010 and the 2010 value of commercial fishing gear used for taking these species. However, the total payment is limited to a total of \$1 million from the Marine Resource Fund (from the recreational fishing licenses sales). At a time when there is a significant state budget shortfall, it is inconceivable that they would use the money to put one more nail in the industry's coffin. And there is nothing included to compensate the

restaurants who will feel the impact because it will take three of the most popular seafood items off their menus.

We ask that you do all you can to prevent the passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin A. Mann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "M".

Robin A. Mann, Chair  
Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce  
Board of Directors

Gov. Beverly Perdue  
Senator Stan White  
Rep. Tim Spear  
Rep. Bill Owens  
Dare County Board of Commissioners  
Hyde County Board of Commissioners