



## North Carolina Wildlife Federation

*Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation*

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### RESOLUTION

## Consolidation of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries into the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to Eliminate Redundancy and Improve Natural Resource Management Efficacy

**WHEREAS**, North Carolina is blessed with abundant, diverse, and valuable fish and wildlife resources that serve to enhance the quality and standard of life for all citizens, including the state's heritage, culture, human and ecosystem health, and economic well-being; and,

**WHEREAS**, existence of these resources places a solemn duty and responsibility on government to properly manage and protect public trust resources in the most effective and efficient way possible for the interest of the resource and on behalf of all the citizens of the state; and,

**WHEREAS**, efficiency and efficacy are critical aspects of any professional natural resource management program; and,

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina Wildlife Federation was formed in 1945 on the premise that fish and wildlife conservation programs must be conducted and managed in a manner that prioritizes the resource and is representative of citizens who value, utilize, and enjoy these resources through outdoor recreational activities; and,

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina Wildlife Federation was instrumental in the establishment of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission ("WRC") in 1947, whose purpose by Statute Article #143-239 is to "manage, restore, develop, cultivate, conserve, protect, and regulate the wildlife resources of the State of North Carolina"; and,

**WHEREAS**, historically, in a time of exceptional abundance of marine fishery stocks, the management of marine fishes was set aside to a separate agency, originally called the Office of Commercial Fisheries, to allocate harvests at maximum levels for commercial purposes with little regard for protecting breeding stocks to replenish future fisheries; and,

**WHEREAS**, over the past 25 years, the levels of marine fish stocks have diminished dramatically due to overharvest allowed by permissive regulations of the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission (“MFC”) that have been inadequate to protect the stocks from overharvest; and,

**WHEREAS**, since the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (“DMF”) has never had adequate budgetary or policy support from its parent agency (currently the NC Department of Environmental Quality), the administration, or the General Assembly, the programs and plans offered to manage marine fisheries stocks have always been too little, too late, leading to the significant decline in marine fisheries experienced in North Carolina today; and,

**WHEREAS**, the missions of the WRC and DMF to protect and enhance the public trust natural resources and habitats of North Carolina are closely aligned but create areas of duplication, redundancy, uncertainty, and inefficiency as indicated by the partial list presented here:

- Artificial, arbitrary and burdensome designation of coastal, joint, and inland waters on every coastal tributary with different jurisdictions, rules, and enforcement on each body of water without any obvious beneficial purpose, occupying significant personnel resources for the adoption of Joint Rules by each agency, the publication of hundreds of Rules in the NC Administrative Code.
- Separate law enforcement divisions to enforce the rules for each type of fishing waters, which in effect mandate that the same fishes swimming back and forth have different protection depending upon where they may be at any given time and often the officers of each agency may be patrolling the same waters monitoring different activities such as commercial and recreational fishing that often result in multiple checks of the same individual.
- Separate aerial units for WRC and DMF, each employing its own pilots and aircraft and separate communication systems and centers, and operators in different locations, often with duplicate radio repeaters on the same tower paying two rental fees, and duplicate recruitment and training programs for law enforcement officers.
- Separate administrative functions for each agency including: purchasing, printing, personnel management, license sales and record keeping, legal representation and Rule making, warehousing, and storage of uniforms and other assigned gear for enforcement and fishery management purposes, virtual technologies for public awareness and access.
- Separate governance by extensive boards of commissioners (WRC has 19 members and MFC has 9 members), which represents a large commitment of resources with no identifiable benefit other than political patronage, especially with regards to the MFC and the archaic, gubernatorial criteria of member appointments based on the economic segment of the industry they represent.

**WHEREAS**, a decision to consolidate the MFC and DMF with the WRC would increase effectiveness of the natural resource programs in North Carolina, while saving significant funds, reducing bureaucracy and enforcement issues, and eliminating public confusion.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation in official session this sixteenth day of November 2019, that for the reasons given herein that the consolidation of the MFC and DMF into the WRC would result in a more effective agency to manage and administer the fish, wildlife, and marine fisheries resources of North Carolina, and the provision of equitable access to public trust resources, enhancing livelihoods and recreation for participants by promoting the ability of fish and wildlife to reproduce and be maintained in a healthy state for the future.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the North Carolina Wildlife Federation strongly recommends the consolidation of the MFC and DMF into the WRC to create one fish and wildlife agency as an efficiency measure to reduce wasteful, excessive duplication of responsibilities, programs, personnel, and services; to realize economies and efficiencies from consolidation; and to improve administrative, regulatory, and management efforts directed toward the public trust fish and wildlife resources of North Carolina.