



South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
Freshwater Fisheries Section  
Santee Cooper Blue Catfish  
Public Meetings Summary

Santee, SC  
Moncks Corner, SC  
Cross, SC  
September 2013

**For freshwater commercial fishermen**

Contacted by letter

September 12, 2013	45 attendees signed in
6:30-9:00	13 recreational anglers
Santee State Park Village Round	32 commercial anglers
251 State Park Road	5 WFF staff
Santee, SC	3 LW staff

**For general public**

Press Release

E-blast

Website Posting

September 19, 2013	47 attendees signed in
6:30-8:30	35 recreational anglers
Santee Cooper Auditorium	0 commercial anglers
1 Riverwood Drive	12 recreational guides
Moncks Corner, SC	5 WFF staff
	3 LW staff

**For Santee Cooper recreational fishing guides**

Contacted by letter and with assistance of Recreational Fishing Guide Association

September 24, 2013	24 attendees signed in
6:30-9:00	8 recreational anglers
Blacks Camp	1 commercial anglers
1370 Blacks Camp Road	16 recreational guides
Cross, SC	4 WFF staff
	2 LW staff

**Total Attendance**

**116 attendees signed in**  
**56 recreational anglers**  
**33 commercial anglers\***  
**28 recreational guides**  
**14 WFF staff**  
**8 LW staff**

\*multiple attendees classified themselves as more than one type of angler



South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
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Public Meetings Questionnaire

How do you classify yourself (check all that apply)

- 63 (49%) Recreational Fishermen
- 34 (27%) Commercial Fishermen
- 31 (24%) Recreational Fishing Guide

On average, how often do you target blue catfish in the Santee Cooper chain?

- 47 (43%) More than once per week
- 8 (7%) Once per week
- 29 (27%) Two to three times per month
- 7 (6%) Once per month
- 10 (9%) Less than once a month
- Other (7%)
  - 2x per year
  - 1 week per year
  - 1x per year
  - 5x per week
  - 3 weeks per year
  - 4-5x per week
  - Every weekend December-May
  - 50% less than prior due to less bookings

If you are a commercial fishermen or recreational fishing guide, how much of your business is dependent on blue catfish (not including flathead or channel catfish)?

- 12 (16%) 0%
- 11 (15%) 1-20%
- 8 (11%) 21-40%
- 7 (10%) 41-60%
- 17 (23%) 61-80%
- 18 (25%) 81-100%

Have you noticed a decline in blue catfish harvest in recent years?

- 73 (68%) Yes
- 28 (26%) No
- 6 (6%) Not sure

Have you increased your effort to harvest blue catfish in recent years?

- 9 (8%) Yes, and harvested more fish
- 29 (27%) Yes, to maintain current harvest rate
- 65 (60%) No
- 5 (5%) Yes, but decreased harvest rate (write-in answer)

What do you believe is the cause of the decline in blue catfish populations?

- 35 (20%) The lack of overall creel limit
- 23 (13%) The one catfish over 36" is too high of length
- 4 (2%) No closed season
- 51 (29%) The use of trotlines
- 46 (26%) Lake conditions, to include low water flows
- Other (10%)
  - Out of state fish sales
  - Pollution
  - Guides
  - Weather
  - Bowfishing
  - Unmarked Trotlines
  - Lack of Law Enforcement
  - DNR does not know what is happening on lakes
  - High water levels
  - Chemical spraying
  - Oxygen levels
  - Not a native fish
  - Overharvest
  - Grass
  - Selling of Live Fish

Do you believe changes are necessary to the regulation of the Santee Cooper blue catfish?

- 78 (69%) Yes
- 16 (14%) No
- 19 (17%) Not sure

Please check all regulation changes you would like to see concerning the Santee Cooper blue catfish (not to include the flathead or channel catfish)

- 58 (26%) Limited entry into commercial fisheries
- 14 (6%) Moratorium on blue catfish harvest
- 13 (6%) Season closures
- 63 (28%) Daily possession limits
- 35 (16%) Reduction in maximum size limits
- 14 (6%) Gear restrictions
- Other (11%)
  - Release small blues
  - Remove 36" restriction

More restrictions on guides  
Limit commercial fishing to 50 hooks and require larger hooks  
Reduce number of commercial hooks  
Reduce commercial harvest  
Ban bowfishing and noodling  
Limits per boat not per person  
Stop recreational trotlines  
Make blue catfish a game fish  
Limit creel to 10 fish/boat  
Closed season on bowfishing  
Limit commercial fishing to residents only  
Make a blue catfish a game fish  
Only fish caught in ponds made be sold  
Stop recreational trotlines  
Make a 12 fish limit  
Regulate/stop bowfishing  
Create a slot limit  
Restrictions on commercial gear  
Reduce maximum size limit to 30 inches  
Stiff violations (both fines and points)  
Stop the sale of live fish  
Stop the removal of live fish for ponds  
Limit commercial take until population rebounds

Additional Comments:

Need more checks on pollution	Stop noodling
Reduction in maximum size	Change regulations back to three
More restrictions on guides	Monitor water
All changes must affect all user groups	Need a stocking program
Keep the 36 inch limit	40 fish per vessel
10 fish per person	Need steep fines
20 fish per boat	15 fish per person
Stop trot lines	Stop bowfishing
Use only circle hooks	Make blue catfish a game fish
Stiffer penalties	Need study of fish with eggs in marinas
Lower max size to 30 inches	25 fish per boat
Prohibit the sale of blue catfish meat	The state needs to fully fund DNR
Do we have enough officers?	Need to fund more surveys
Stop recreational trotlines	Limit the number of guides and trotlines

Need more law enforcement  
More monitors on bowfishing  
Protect the cats during spawning seasons  
Stop bowfishing during the spawn

Close the season in June and July  
Creel limits are necessary  
The flatheads are harming the blue catfish  
Close commercial fishing to nonresidents

The 26 inch limit on stripers is causing too much competition for the blue catfish  
The guides are seeing more dead fish on the lake  
There is a need for more monitoring of trotlines  
Need to check the commercial anglers and their lines more often. They are using too many lines.  
Need more law enforcement  
Limit needs to be 15-20 fish per boat  
A law needs to be passed to prevent live fish from being moved to pay ponds.  
Enforce whatever laws are made with stronger fines and more man hours on the lakes checking fishermen instead of boaters and non fishermen.  
Need to focus on trotlines, seawall, and bush hooks above I-95.  
Make it a priority to check cat fishermen.  
Need to lower number of hooks on trotlines.  
Need a creel limit on blue catfish.  
Need to reduce the maximum size limit to 30 inches.  
Need creel limit to be no more than 20 catfish, 10 of which can be blue catfish per boat per day.  
Need to protect sub adult fish with a slot limit from 20-32 inches or limit the creel limit for fish less than 20 inches.  
Need to reduce the maximum size limit to 32 inches.  
DNR is to blame because of lack of management. Low water equals low reproduction is a theory, not fact. DNR caterers to the commercial fishermen. Regulations need to be 15 fish per boat, per day, 36 inches reduced to 30 inches and still violations, both monetary and points.  
An annual license fee for guide to operate on SC lakes  
Limit needs to be on boat not person Lower max size to 30 inches  
Add size limit on small cats, catch and release  
No keeping of breeder sized cats during spawn