

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 3, 2013**

David Hilton, Ocracoke Working Waterman's Association (252) 921-0142

***Local Fishermen, Seafood Consumers and Community Members Urged to Attend:***

**Public Forum Set, Monday, May 6, 1:30 pm – Legislative Office Building - Room 643**

**HB 983 - 2013 Fisheries Economic Development Act [Game Fish Bill]**

Legislation granting speckled trout, red drum, and striped bass gamefish status will be the topic of a public forum on Monday, May 6, 1:30 p.m. at the Legislative Office Building, 300 N. Salisbury Street, Raleigh. The designation is included in House Bill 983, the 2013 Fisheries Economic Development Act.

The forum was scheduled to allow gamefish designation proponents and opponents an opportunity to share information supporting their position with legislators. Members of the public wishing to speak should arrive early to allow ample time to sign in. Speakers will have two minutes to convey information for legislators to consider.

David Hilton, President of Ocracoke Working Watermen Association, stresses the need to bring together a cross-section of fishermen, consumers and business owners such as restaurants and retail markets that will be affected by this legislation. "We urge you to show your support against HB 983. Game fish status is not needed to maintain healthy stocks, it would have a devastating impact on commercial fishing families' income and eliminate availability of these three species to all consumers - NC residents, restaurants, tourists, and seafood retail markets. "

In addition to coastal families affected by the proposed legislation, local foods advocates and seafood consumers from across the state are encouraged to attend the forum as the number of attendees will be an important statement to legislators.

Speakers will be limited to two minutes and must sign up before the Forum to be heard. Speakers are encouraged to prepare a written statement to submit for public record. According to Hilton, "The message is this: HB 983 reallocates public trust resources to a private interest group to the exclusion of the seafood consuming public and the fishermen that serve them. "

A chartered bus will be leaving Beaufort Square Shopping Center Monday at 8 am. Reservations must be made (first come, first served) by calling April Taylor at (252) 728-3993 or email her at [taylorfurniture@bizec.rr.com](mailto:taylorfurniture@bizec.rr.com).

A stop will be made at the New Bern Mall (near Belk's) at 9 am to pickup anyone from neighboring counties (Pamlico, Craven, Onslow, Pender) who would like to join the group traveling from Carteret County.

For more information on HB 983 or to sign the online petition, please go to: <http://www.change.org/petitions/nc-general-assembly-keep-local-seafood-on-nc-dinner-plates-oppose-nc-house-bill-983>.

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