

Resolution Pertaining to the Use of Gill Nets in the Southern Flounder Fishery in North Carolina

*Presented by UNCG Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation Class of 2005 Alumni:
Anne Pollok, Jen Gross, John Hart-Smith, Laura Patch, and Katie Rose*

Whereas, southern flounder (*Paralichthys lethostigma*) have likely been overfished in NC since the early 1990s; and the NC Division of Marine Fisheries has officially listed southern flounder as overfished since 2002; and

Whereas, about 85% of the catch of southern flounder in North Carolina is from commercial landings; and

Whereas, landings from gill nets surpassed all other forms of harvesting southern flounder in the early 1990s; and

Whereas, gill nets have significant by-catch including sea birds, juvenile flounder, and other commercial finfish, as well as rare, threatened, and endangered species such as sea turtles, diamondback terrapins, and the Atlantic sturgeon; and

Whereas, a study looking at the North Carolina shallow water gill net fisheries indicated that 67% of the catch in flounder gill nets was composed of non-target marine species; and

Whereas, the sustainable spawning stock biomass of most marine fish is approximately 20%, and

Whereas, the spawning stock biomass of southern flounder has been reduced to 5.4%; and

Whereas, National Marine Fisheries Service has issued a Permit to Incidentally Take Endangered/Threatened Species, Permit # 1528, allowing 65 lethal takes of sea turtles in the fall each year from 2005-2010; and

Whereas, the loss of 65 juvenile and adult sea turtles per year over a 6-year period represents hundreds of thousands of hatchlings; and

Whereas, the allowable non-lethal take of sea turtles is 185 per year for the same 6-year period, and many turtles released from gill nets have a reduced chance of survival; and

Whereas, Florida, Georgia, have prohibited commercial gill net fishing and South Carolina has prohibited gill net fishing in ocean waters; and

Whereas, gill nets are less selective in catch than pound nets, gigs, and hook and line; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that NC Marine Fisheries Commission is urged to close the flounder gill net fishery; and be it further

Resolved, that we call upon the NC Marine Fisheries Commission to regulate the flounder fishery so that only more selective types of fishing gear such as gigs and hook and line are allowed.