

# Wrightsville

FREE

## BEACH MAGAZINE

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# worth saving

3 local organizations are preserving the treasure that is our Cape Fear Coast



### THE SPOT

Wrightsville's iconic watering hole is fondly remembered

### SAVOR

10 (plus one) great places to eat on the water

### WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Our eighth annual edition features 13 women who are raising the bar





NATURE

movie highlights the  
red drum

*Dangerous gill nets are depleting their populations  
— but what can be done?*

Josh Eddings, Luke Pearson and Seth Vernon are part of the five-person team that produced the documentary *Red Fish Can't Jump*. WBM File Photo.

**P**op quiz: Can you name the North Carolina State Fish? Time's up. It's the red drum. In fact, 97 percent of the country's supply of red drum comes from our great state. Which begs the troubling question: Why are we letting our red drum population become so depleted that, in the near future, it may not be here at all? The demise of our red drum would be not only environmentally destructive, but also a significant economic setback for North Carolina and its fishermen.

Fortunately for the red drum, a team of dedicated folks is fighting for its restoration. Captain Seth Vernon, of Double Haul Guide Service, and a group of local filmmakers and musicians have made a documentary film about the red drum and its struggle entitled *Red Fish Can't Jump*.

"It's about following the science of the matter," says Vernon. "What I mean by that is if we just pay attention to what nature tells us — that the red drum is a very aggressive fish when it comes to reproduction — they could bounce back fast if we stepped back, followed the right guidelines and let them recover."

So what's hurting the red drum? The immediate answer is

over-fishing. North Carolina is one of the few states in the South that still permits the use of gill nets, which not only capture red drum in high numbers but also entangle endangered sea turtles, dolphins and more. South Carolina, Florida and Georgia have outlawed gill nets without detriment to their commercial fishing industry. This past May, the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission revised regulations to address interactions with sea turtles in the state's gill net fishery, though the new regulations will not apply to run-around, strike or drop nets that are used to surround a school of fish and then are immediately retrieved.

Another threat is thoughtless behavior, such as allowing nets to drift freely, unattended, in the ocean, or catching red drum (and other fish) that, because of state measurement guidelines, are too small to keep and keeping them anyway, reducing the chance of population recovery.

"No one is against commercial fishing," says Vernon. "We just want rules to be followed and laws to be made and upheld before it is too late. If we ignore the situation and deplete our fish populations, then a lot of North Carolinians who make a living catching fish will be out of a job." — Justin Jacobs

**THE DETAILS:** To find out more about the red drum and how you can help, visit the Coastal Conservation Association of North Carolina website, [www.ccanc.org](http://www.ccanc.org). To get a copy of *Red Fish Can't Jump*, visit [www.redfishcantjump.com](http://www.redfishcantjump.com).