SUMMER FLOUNDER  
(06/05 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - Concern - The 2005 Northeast Fisheries Science Center Stock Assessment indicates the stock is not overfished, but overfishing is occurring based on the current biological reference points. Fishing mortality steadily decreasing and spawning stock biomass is steadily increasing since the early 1990s.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1995-2004 – 3,488,255 lbs./$5,841,650

2004 Commercial Landings and Value – 4,845,206 lbs.(quota-managed)/$7,621,384


Status of Fisheries Management Plan – In North Carolina, summer flounder is currently included in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to ASMFC/MAFMC FMP compliance requirements. Currently managed under Amendment 12 to the joint ASMFC/MAFMC Fishery Management Plan for Summer Flounder. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls, minimum fish size limits, recreational bag limits, and a moratorium on new entrants into the fishery.

Research and Data Needs – Discard mortality estimates, age comparisons of northern and southern fish using scales and otoliths, continued expansion of observer coverage in flounder trawl and scallop dredge fisheries.

Current Regulations (2005) – Commercial:14-inch minimum size limit in internal and ocean waters. Closed season in Atlantic Ocean through November 1, once 80 percent of quota is harvested. Bycatch trip limit of 100 lbs. during closed season. A License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean is required to land more than 100 lbs. per trip. Recreational: 14-inch /8-fish limit in internal and ocean waters with no closed season.

Harvest Season (2005) — January until 80 percent of the quota is harvested (March-April) and November to December.

Size at maturity, age at maturity – 11 inches/1.5 years

Historical maximum age, current maximum age – 15 years/10 years

Average juvenile index 1995-2004*# – 11.9, 2004* – 5.9

Habits/Habitats – Summer flounder are estuarine dependent members of the left-eyed flounder family that also include southern flounder and gulf flounder. Summer flounder migrate offshore and north during winter and early spring, and inshore and south during summer and fall. Summer flounder spawn from November through March when water temperatures are between 53 degrees and 67 degrees. Larval summer flounder enter inlets and settle on sandy bottoms in higher-salinity areas of estuaries. After or towards the end of their first year, summer flounder move into ocean waters to spawn and join coastal migratory groups.

* Arithmetic mean from Pamlico Sound Survey (June only)
# 1999 index excluded because sampling conducted in July

For more information, see DMF Species Leads page