Stock Status——Viable. The status of dolphin is based on trends analysis of landings that shows no declining trend along with consistent size distributions over time. Concerns over dolphin are primarily based on the potential for new fisheries (primarily longlines) to compromise historical allocations in the fishery. The South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council FMP (detailed below) has addressed these concerns.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1991-2000——179,607 lbs./$270,663

2000 Commercial Landings and Value——198,442 lbs./$308,270


2000 Recreational Landings——5,387,736 lbs.

Average Citations 1991-2000 and Current Number (Weight = 35lbs.)——285/315

Status of Fisheries Management Plan——The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) FMP, has developed a fishery management plan (FMP) for dolphin (the FMP also includes wahoo) that is awaiting approval by the Secretary of Commerce. The goal of the new FMP is to maintain the current level of harvest and prevent effort shifts or new fisheries from compromising the allocation of dolphin between recreational and commercial user groups. The allocation is set in the FMP at 87% recreational and 13% commercial. In 2000, the recreational fishery accounted for 96.5% of all dolphin landed in North Carolina.

Data/Research Needs——Stock identification studies, age and growth, reproduction, migration, diet.

Current minimum size limit——None.

Harvest Season——Open year round, however, landings are seasonal.

Size and Age at maturity——24 inches TL/4-6 months old.

Historical and Current Maximum Age——4 years old/4 years old (needs validation).


Habits/Habitats——Coastal/Oceanic migratory pelagic species. Current hypothesis suggests that dolphin migrate from the central Caribbean northward through the mid-Atlantic to Bermuda and back to the central Caribbean. Fast growing, early maturing species that spawns over a protracted time period.

For more information, see DMF Species Leads page