KINGFISHES
(06/04 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status --- Unknown – North Carolina biologists are currently gathering important life history data necessary to manage these three species.

Average Commercial Landings/Value -- 1994-2003 - 640,166 lbs., $581,265

2003 Commercial Landings and Value-- 652,636 lb., $644,920

Average Recreational Landings 1994-2003 -- 295,244 lbs., 2003 - 245,079

Average Number of Award Citations 1994-2003 – 192  2003 - 229

Status of Fishery Management Plan--- State plan scheduled to begin in 2005

Data/Research Needs--Studies to determine distribution and composition of the three kingfish species found in N.C., habitat utilization, migration studies (tagging), maturity and fecundity studies, age and growth studies, juvenile abundance index.

Current Regulations---No minimum size or bag limit

Harvest Season-- Open year round

Size and Age at maturity-- 7-9 inches/1 year old

Historical and Current Maximum Age--- 7

Juvenile Abundance Index-- Should be available in 2005

Habits/Habitats---Three species of kingfish occur in North Carolina; southern, northern, and gulf. The southern kingfish is the most abundant of the three species and like the northern kingfish prefers mud or sand-mud bottom types. Gulf kingfish prefer the sandy bottoms of the surf zone. All species are relatively short-lived, demersal members of the drum family that include Atlantic croaker, spot, red drum, black drum, spotted seatrout and weakfish. Kingfish exhibit seasonal movement from estuarine and nearshore ocean waters to deeper offshore waters when water temperature cools. Spawning takes place in the ocean from April-October. Kingfish are also known as sea mullet, Virginia mullet, whiting and roundhead.

For more information, see DMF Species Leads page