

To: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission
Dr. Louis Daniel, Director

From: Trish Murphey, Biological Review Team Chair

Subject: Stock Status Report

Date: June 30, 2009

Attached is the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries' 2009 Stock Status Report with the changes from last year outlined below. This annual report is intended to serve as a general barometer of the overall health of our fishery resources and is used to prioritize development of fishery management plans and subsequent plan amendments.

Summer flounder was changed from Concern to Recovering because the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring based on the 2008 Northeast Fisheries Science Center stock assessment. However the target benchmarks have not yet been met. Fishing mortality has continued to decrease over time and spawning stock biomass has increased over time.

Monkfish also changed from Concern to Recovering because of revisions to the biomass reference points in the 2007 stock assessment. Both the Northern and Southern stocks are no longer overfished. Biomass indices are above the minimum biomass threshold and annual biomass target; however there is some uncertainty in the stock assessment results.

Bay scallop changed from Depleted to Recovering based on indices reaching target levels in Core Sound and overall improvements in indices within Pamlico, Back, and Bogue sounds.

Scup showed improvement from Concern to Viable because the assessment model used changed from a simple index to a catch-at-age model. This stock is no longer considered data poor. Based on this new stock assessment, the stock is no longer considered overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The current rebuilding goal was met, therefore the stock is considered rebuilt.

King mackerel changed from Viable to Concern because of uncertainty in the 2008 stock assessment. These uncertainties center around mixing rates between the Gulf, Atlantic and Mexican stocks off of Southern Florida, limited data from the Mexican government and the inability to determine whether overfishing is occurring. If the stock is experiencing overfishing, it is at a low level.

Atlantic croaker changed from Viable to Concern because of concerns about the coastwide decrease in landings. North Carolina commercial landings have decreased since 2003. The next stock assessment is scheduled for 2009-2010.

Spotted seatrout also changed from Viable to Concern based on recent increases in catch, catch per unit effort and an expansion of the age structure. The N.C. spotted seatrout stock assessment indicated the stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing based on data from 1991 to 2006. An updated stock assessment including 2007 and 2008 data will be completed this summer.

Species to watch in 2009-2010 include those species that have NC FMPs being developed (spotted seatrout) and revised (Southern flounder, striped bass, and blue crab) as well as those species with upcoming amendments likely through the federal councils or ASMFC (reef fishes, Atlantic croaker, American shad, coastal sharks, summer flounder).