

DOLPHIN

(06/05 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status-Viable - The status of dolphin is based on trends in landings data. Although dolphins are fast growing and mature early, there is concern about the potential for new fisheries (primarily longlines) to compromise historical allocations in the fishery. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) addresses these concerns.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1995-2004 - 204,290 lbs./\$327,556

2004 Commercial Landings and Value - 255,805 lbs./\$452,590

Average Recreational Landings 1995-2004 - 4,213,544 lbs.

2004 Recreational Landings - 2,982,445 lbs.

Average Number of Citations 1995-2004: 328, **2004** (Weight -35 lbs.): 155

Status of Fisheries Management Plan - In North Carolina, dolphin is currently included in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to SAFMC FMP compliance requirements. The SAFMC approved an FMP for dolphin in June 2004. The goal of the 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 set in the FMP is 87 percent recreational and 13 percent commercial.

Data/Research Needs - Stock identification studies, migration, diet, batch fecundity, direct validation through mark and recapture to confirm scale annuli, collection of small, fishery-independent samples to accurately describe first year growth rates.

Current minimum size limit (2005) - None.

Harvest Season (2005) -Open year round, however, landings are seasonal.

Size and Age at maturity-23 inches TL/ 4 months-6 months

Historical and Current Maximum Age-4 years/ 3 years

Average and Current Juvenile Abundance Index (1992-2001)-Unknown.

Habits/Habitats-Coastal/Oceanic highly migratory pelagic species. Current hypothesis suggests dolphins migrate from the central Caribbean through the mid-Atlantic to Bermuda and back to the central Caribbean, however the occurrence of year-round dolphins off the coast of North Carolina suggest dolphins likely have a more complex stock structure than originally thought. Dolphins are extremely fast growing (3.78 mm/day in the first 6 months), mature early, and have a protracted spawning season (year round, with highest levels from January through June).

For more information, see [DMF Species Leads page](#)