

SOUTHERN FLOUNDER

(06/00 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status--Concern. Exploitation has shown an increasing trend in the last few years, and the stock consists primarily of age 1 and age 2 fish. Stock status appears to be dependent on annual recruitment. 1999 landings were affected by hurricanes.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1987-1999-- 3,629,044 lb., \$5,694,674

1999 Commercial Landings and Value -- 2,929,796 lb, \$5,129,246

Average Recreational Landings 1987-1999 – 102,731 lb. **1999 --** 77,149 lb

Status of Fisheries Management Plan-- Summer flounder FMP has a limited effect on this species. A NC DMF FMP is underway and is projected to be effective during the first quarter of 2002. Issues are needed from the public.

Research and Data Needs-- stock assessment (underway), continued monitoring of commercial fisheries, expanded coverage of estuarine gill net fishery, bycatch mortality estimates. Fisheries independent data.

Current Minimum Size Limit-- 13 inches internal, 15 inches ocean

Harvest Season-- no closure.

Size and Age at Maturity-- 13.6 inches, 1 year old

Historical and Current Maximum Age-- 8 years old, 5 years old

Juvenile Abundance Index Average 1987-1999-- 3.5 **1999 --** 3.0 (numbers of individuals per unit of effort) (unvalidated)

Habits/Habitats--Southern flounder are estuarine dependent members of the left-eyed flounder family that include summer flounder and gulf flounder. Southern flounder migrate offshore and south during winter and early spring and inshore and north during late spring, summer and fall. Southern flounder spawn in near shore continental shelf waters from November through March. Young fish enter inlets and settle on muddy bottoms in lower-salinity areas of estuaries. Unlike summer flounder, adult southern flounder return to North Carolina's estuaries after spawning.

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