

AMERICAN SHAD

(06/09 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status – Concern – Commercial landings decreased significantly in 2008, and were well below the 10-year average. Juvenile abundance in 2008 increased and is just below the 10-year average. However, the current juvenile seine survey is inadequate as a stand-alone indicator of American shad juvenile abundance. The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is currently collecting fishery dependent and independent data.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1999-2008 – 231,610 lbs./\$187,724

2008 Commercial Landings and Value – 118,971 lbs./\$168,826

Average Recreational Landings 1999-2008 – unknown, **2008** - unknown

Average Recreational Commercial Gear License (RCGL) Landings 2002-2008 – 14,623 lbs., **2008** – 4,235 lbs.

Status of Fishery Management Plan (FMP) - In North Carolina, American shad are included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) FMP compliance requirements. An ASMFC FMP for Shad and River Herring was approved in 1985 and Amendment 1 of this plan was approved October 1998. ASMFC completed a coastwide stock assessment for American shad in August of 2007, which indicated stocks in the Albemarle Sound and tributaries were stable, and stock status in other systems of the state was unknown. Although stock status for the Albemarle Sound and tributaries is stable, total mortality is higher than the recommended level, and current abundance is considered to be well below the historical potential for these stocks. The stock assessment further concluded that most stocks along the East Coast are at all time lows and are not recovering. Amendment 3 (applies to American shad only) to the ASMFC FMP for Shad and River Herring is being developed.

Research and Data Needs – Conduct spawning area surveys and juvenile abundance surveys in all NC river systems; improve and expand methods of monitoring catch and effort data in commercial and recreational fisheries; establish indices of abundance in all N.C. river systems utilizing dependent and independent data; validate current aging techniques for American shad.

Current Regulations – There is no size limit. The recreational bag limit for shad is a 10-fish aggregate (hickory and American combined) per person, per day.

Harvest Season - The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission adopted a rule in 1995 establishing a commercial harvest season of January 1-April 14; it is unlawful to take American shad and hickory shad by any method except hook-and-line from April 15-December 31.

Size and Age at Maturity – males: 12-17.5 inches fork length (FL)/3-5 years; females: 15-19 inches FL/4-6 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age -10 years/8 years

Juvenile Abundance Index 1999-2008 - 0.90, **2008** - 0.30 (unvalidated)

Habits and Habitats - American shad are anadromous, spending majority of life in the ocean, returning to fresh water to spawn. Spawning occurs from March to mid-June, primarily in the high flow portions

of rivers where there is sufficient current to suspend and move the eggs. Juveniles spend their first growing season in their natal river and sound systems until the water temperatures decrease, triggering emigration to the ocean. American shad will remain in the ocean until reaching sexual maturity and then return to fresh water to spawn.

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