

GAG GROUPER

(06/99 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock status--Overfished. According to the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC), the spawning stock ratio from the 1996 assessment is 13% and the gag is considered overfished. Only 5.5% of the fish captured in 1995 were males versus 19.6% from 1976-1982. Also called black grouper or gray grouper.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1987-1998--264,109 lb,\$544,701

1998 Commercial Landings and Value--297,239 lb,\$742,099

Average Recreational Landings 1987-1998--96,802 lb **1998** 13,384 lb

Average Number of Award Citations 1987-1998/1998 only--Not recorded by species.

Status of Fisheries Management Plan--Managed under the SAFMC Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan of 1983. Amendment 4, effective Jan 1992, established a 20 inches TL minimum size; Amendment 9, effective Feb 1999, increased the minimum size to 24 inches TL, created a 2 fish recreational bag and a March-April closure (bag limit only, no sale).

Data and Research Needs--Develop juvenile index, assess release mortality values, conduct population assessment, expand age and growth studies, determine migration patterns.

Current Minimum Size Limits--State and Federal: 24 inches TL.

Harvest season--Year round except that no more than the 2 fish per person bag limit can be caught in March and April (both recreational and commercial fishermen).

Size and Age at Maturity--First mature (as females) at ages 5, possibly 4, when fish are greater than 26 inches TL. Transformation to the male generally occurs around age 10 and greater than 39 inches TL.

Historical and Current Maximum Age--22 years.

Juvenile Abundance Indices Average 1987-1998 and 1998--None available.

Habits/Habitats--Large juveniles and adults occur on hard or "live" bottom on the outer continental shelf. Larval gag are estuarine dependent. Spawning occurs offshore and pelagic larvae are carried into estuaries where they reside in sea grass beds or oyster rocks. The juveniles emigrate in the fall to nearshore reefs.

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