

**ATLANTIC CROAKER**  
(06/04 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status** -- *Viable*, Awaiting the approval from the ASMFC in the fall 2004 of a coastwide stock assessment that indicates that the stock is not overfished. Increased commercial CPUE's and expanded age structure suggests the stock is viable. The annual juvenile abundance index is below the 10-year average. The 2003 recreational landings have increased overall. Recreational harvest in inside waters was below the 10-year average but larger fish were captured.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value - 1994-2003** -- 9,912,458 lbs., \$3,050,552

**2003 Commercial Landings Value** – 14,429,197 lbs., \$2,923,946

**Average MRFSS Recreational Landings – 1994-2003** – 281,324 lbs., **2003** – 307,264 lbs.

**Average RCGL Landings – 2002-2003** - 23,880 lbs., **2003** - 11,368 lbs.

**Average Number of Award Citations - 1994-2003** - 4, **2003** - 7

**Status of Fisheries Management Plan** - An ASMFC FMP was created in 1987. The ASMFC review of the FMP in 1992 and again in 1998 determined research needs, which included: an updated stock assessment and an amendment to the FMP. A coastwide stock assessment was completed and reviewed by the ASMFC Atlantic croaker technical committee in 2001. The technical committee found there were limitations and uncertainties, so a number of tasks were added for an updated version. In November 2002, the Atlantic croaker stock assessment was prioritized for a SEDAR peer review. The Technical Committee met in April 2003 to ensure all data was consistent between states and included information throughout the entire range along the east coast. A review panel was convened and the SEDAR review for the Atlantic croaker stock assessment was conducted on October 8-9, 2003 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Many members of the Panel accepted that the stock was not overfished; however, full consensus was not reached. The Panel described several major issues in which the technical committee would have to complete. Currently, a supplement of the stock assessment is in preparation by the technical committee and it will be reviewed again by the SEDAR. Complete acceptance of the updated stock assessment must be decided and will be under review by the South Atlantic Board some time in 2004.

**Research and Data Needs** - Continued collection of information on the biology and population dynamics including (growth, age structure, reproductive biology, migration, mortality, and stock structure).

**Current Minimum Size Limit** - none

**Harvest season** - Year round. Banned flynet fishing in ocean waters south of Cape Hatteras in 1994 along with the introduction of BRDs in shrimp trawls, scrap fish limits in trawls since 1991, and culling panels in long haul seines have indirectly reduced the catch of juvenile Atlantic croaker.

**Size and Age at Maturity** – 5-9 inches and ages 2-3 for males, 7-9 inches and ages 2-3 for females.

**Historical and Current Maximum Age** - 15 years old - 12 years old

**Juvenile Abundance Index Average - 1994-2003** - 300.2\* (number of individuals per unit of effort), **2003** - 130.9 (validated)

**Habits/Habitats** - Inhabit mud and sand-bottom areas, feed chiefly on crustaceans, worms, mollusks, detritus, and small fishes. Atlantic croakers have a protracted spawning season with a peak during October in North Carolina. The pelagic eggs and recently hatched larvae drift passively toward land. Later, the advanced larval stages and juveniles continue their migration inshore by actively swimming into estuarine nursery areas. Maximum recruitment of juvenile fish is in the spring; however, sometimes maximum recruitment is only in the fall for the northern Pamlico Sound area.

**Interesting Atlantic Croaker Links** –

[http://www.odu.edu/sci/cqfe/age&growth/Atlantic\\_Croaker/atlanticcroaker.htm](http://www.odu.edu/sci/cqfe/age&growth/Atlantic_Croaker/atlanticcroaker.htm)  
<http://www.asmfc.org> under the managed species list

\*Pamlico Sound Survey arithmetic JAI.

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