

EASTERN OYSTER

(06/06 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status – *Concern* - Long term decline caused by over harvesting, habitat disturbances, and pollution. Most recently stressed by Dermo (*Perkinsus marinus*) infections.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1996-2005 – 260,217 lbs. of meat/\$1,072,059

2005 Commercial Landings and Value – 377,697 lbs. of meat/\$1,681,233

Average Recreational Landings 1996-2005 - Unknown

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) - A state FMP was adopted in August 2001 by the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC). Recommendations are currently being implemented. FMP was amended in 2003 to change the criteria for hand-harvest methods only. The FMP will be updated in 2006.

Research and Data Needs - Habitat size and location; oyster density within habitat; fishing mortality and substrate disturbance caused by different harvest techniques; catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) data; parasite: life history, means of transmission, and possible control methods; effects of pollutants; effects of bottom disturbing fishing gear; accurate landing data for commercial and recreational harvest from public and private bottom.

Current Regulations (2006) – 3-inch shell length

Harvest Season - Open season October 15 through May 15, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Director may impose any or all of the following restrictions:

- Specify days of the week harvesting will be allowed.
- Specify areas.
- Specify means and methods, which may be employed in the taking.
- Specify the time period.
- Specify the quantity, but shall not exceed possession of more than 50 bushels.
- Specify the minimum size limit by shell length, but not less than 2 ½ inches.

Size and Age at Maturity- 2-inch shell length/4-12 weeks after settlement

Historical and Current Maximum Age - 40 years/unknown

Juvenile Abundance Index 1996-2005 - 0.85, **2005** – 1.29

Habits/Habitats - Oysters are bivalve mollusks residing in intertidal or subtidal estuarine environments. A relatively clean firm substrate where water circulation provides sufficient food is necessary for oysters to attach, survive and grow to market size (3 inches). Optimal salinity and temperature ranges are 12 to 25 ppt. and 10 to 16° C (50 to 79 degrees F) respectively. Spawning is triggered by increases in temperature (> 20° C), and salinity (>10 ppt.) and occurs in North Carolina from May through September. Spatfall information on cultch planting sites available on request.

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