

KINGFISHES

Stock Status - *Unknown* – Commercial landings in 2009 were above their 10-year average. The majority of the commercial landings were landed in the ocean sink net fishery. Recreational landings in 2009 were slightly above their 10-year average. The Pamlico Sound juvenile abundance index in 2009 was over two times the 10-year average.

Average Commercial Landings and Value - 2000-2009 – 619,979 lbs./\$550,505

2009 Commercial Landings and Value – 721,924 lbs./\$789,000

Average Recreational Landings - 2000-2009 – 362,720 lbs., **2009** – 327,841 lbs

Average Number of Award Citations (1.5 lbs) - 2000-2009 – 263, **2009** - 315

Status of Fishery Management Plan (FMP) – The North Carolina FMP (2007) is available on DMF web site. Two different stock assessments were modeled to determine sustainable harvest levels, but reviewers rejected the stock assessments due to deficiencies in the data. A major deficiency cited by all reviewers was the lack of migration (mixing) data to determine the movement of kingfishes along the North Carolina coast as well as the Atlantic coast.

Research and Data Needs - Studies to determine distribution, stock structure and composition of the three kingfish species found in North Carolina along with habitat utilization, migration studies (tagging), maturity (ongoing) and fecundity studies, age and growth studies (ongoing), validation of a juvenile abundance index, and a stock assessment. A stock assessment for the recently completed FMP was not included due to insufficient biological data for kingfishes.

Current Regulations - None

Harvest Season - Year round

Size and Age at maturity – 7-9 inches total length (TL)/1 year

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 8 years

Juvenile Abundance Index – 2000-2009 – Pamlico Sound Survey – 4.4, **2009** – 10.0

Habits and Habitats - Kingfishes are also known as sea mullet, Virginia mullet, whiting and roundhead and include three species in North Carolina; southern, northern, and gulf. The southern kingfish is the most abundant of the three species and prefers mud or sand-mud bottom types like the northern kingfish. Gulf kingfish prefer the sandy bottoms of the surf zone. Kingfishes move from estuarine and nearshore ocean waters to deeper offshore waters as water temperature cools. Spawning takes place in the ocean from April to October.

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