

## **TAUTOG**

(06/01 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status** -- *Overfished*. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has classified the coastwide tautog population as *overfished*. Spawning stock biomass is low and fishing mortality exceeds the management target from Massachusetts to Virginia. No estimates of stock size or mortality are available for tautog in North Carolina.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 1991-2000** -- 870 pounds, \$294.

**2000 Commercial Landings and Value** -- 674 pounds, \$505.

**Average Recreational Landings 1991-2000** --16,757 pounds.

**2000 Recreational Landings** -- 4,209 pounds.

**Average Number of Award Citations 1987-1999** -- 6 and **2000** – 2.

**Status of Fishery Management Plan (FMP)** -- The ASMFC Interstate Tautog Management Plan has been in effect since 1996. FMP compliance requirements include 14 inch minimum-size regulations for both commercial and recreational fishing sectors, as well as other state-by-state management restrictions needed to meet target fishing mortality for the population. Tautog is currently included in the North Carolina Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to ASMFC compliance regulations.

**Research and Data Needs** -- Improved fishery dependent and fishery independent sampling in the southern half of its range (DE, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA). Juvenile abundance indices and essential-habitat characterization.

**Current Minimum Size Limit** – None.

**Harvest Season** -- No restrictions.

**Size and Age at Maturity** – 11 inches, 3 years old.

**Historical and Current Maximum Age** – 30 + years.

**Juvenile Abundance Indices** -- None Available.

**Habits/Habitats** -- Tautog are slow growing/long-lived reef fish found from Nova Scotia to Georgia. Adults utilize submerged hard-structure as habitat, including offshore and inshore wrecks, artificial reefs, rocky reefs, breakwaters, and pier areas. Young-of-the-year tautog rely primarily on shallow, estuarine, macroalgal areas and eelgrass beds as nursery habitat. In its northern range, adult tautog migrate in the spring from offshore wintering locations to inshore habitats to spawn and feed, then return offshore in the fall as water temperatures drop. The extent of this migration is probably less pronounced in the southern portion of its range. The spawning period extends from late April to early June. Slow growth to maturity and small, within-season home ranges render localized tautog populations highly vulnerable to overfishing.

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