

ATLANTIC CROAKER

(06/06 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - *Viable* - The Atlantic croaker population in the mid-Atlantic region is currently not overfished and overfishing is not taking place. Virtually all available data, including commercial landings and the juvenile abundance index demonstrates the stock to be viable. This is a recruitment driven stock where abundance fluctuates in response to large year classes, and over the last few years this abundance has been at historical highs for croaker in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Average Commercial Landings and Value - 1996-2005 – 11,490,700 lbs./\$3,278,757

2005 Commercial Landings Value - 11,196,679 lbs./\$3,335,972

Average Recreational Landings - 1996-2005 – 255,570 lbs., **2005** - 142,298 lbs.

Average Recreational Commercial Gear Landings - 2002-2005 - 17,824 lbs., **2005** - 9,544 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (3 lbs.) - 1996-2005 - 5, **2005** - 2

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) - In North Carolina, Atlantic croaker is currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries(ASMFC)/South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council FMP compliance requirements. An ASMFC FMP was initially approved in 1987, with the most recent review approved in November 2005. Also in November 2005, ASMFC approved Amendment 1 to the FMP. Amendment 1 recommends the establishment of biological reference points to allow for resource management on a coastwide basis, the restoration and maintenance of essential habitat, and the development of research needs to improve future stock assessments.

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 Regulations (2006) - none

Harvest season - Year round.

Size and Age at Maturity – Males: 5-9 inches/2–3 years; Females: 7-9 inches/2-3 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 15 years/13 years

Juvenile Abundance Index - 1996-2005 – 331.3, **2005** – 446.8

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 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 usually in the spring, with movement to offshore waters in the fall.

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