

REEF FISHES

Stock status - Concern - Of the 73 species in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) management unit, 17 species are overfished, 16 are not overfished, and the status of the other 40 is unknown. The 17 overfished species include vermilion snapper, red snapper, red porgy, black sea bass south of Cape Hatteras, red grouper, snowy grouper, golden tilefish, and gray triggerfish.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 2000-2009 – 2,706,616 lbs./\$4,685,810 (Including black sea bass)

2009 Commercial Landings and Value – 3,090,370 lbs./\$5,970,973

Average Recreational Landings 2000-2009 – 1,300,843 lbs., **2009** – 1,506,720 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations 2000-2009/ 2009 only –Amberjack (50 lbs.) (167/95), Grouper (20 lbs.) (65/137), Jack Crevalle (20 lbs.) (31/2), Porgy (4 lbs.) (18/38), Sheepshead (10 lbs.) (54/156), Red snapper (10 lbs.) (36/42), and Triggerfish (7 lbs.) (9/37)

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) - In North Carolina, reef fish are currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to SAFMC FMP compliance requirements developed in Amendments 1-16. Amendment 16 has been approved by SAFMC and is waiting for final rule. This amendment established commercial and recreational allocations for gag grouper and vermilion snapper, a closed season for shallow water grouper (gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, yellowmouth grouper, tiger grouper, yellowfin grouper, graysby, and coney) from January through April, a gag and vermilion snapper commercial quota of 352,940 lbs and 1.1 million lbs, respectively, a 3-grouper aggregate of which only one grouper can be either a gag or black grouper reduced from the 5-grouper aggregate, an exclusion of captain and crew on for-hire vessels from possessing a bag limit for groupers, a 5 vermilion snapper bag limit dropping from 10 fish, and a recreational closed season for vermilion snapper from November through March.

Research and Data Needs - Develop juvenile and adult indices, assess survival rates, conduct population assessment, expand age and growth studies, determine migration patterns.

Current Regulations - State and federal: greater amberjack-28 inches Fork Length (FL) (recreational) and 36 inches FL (commercial); black and gag groupers-24 inches Total Length (TL); red, scamp, yellowfin, and yellowmouth groupers-20 inches TL; red porgy-14 inches TL; silk and blackfin snappers-12 inches TL; red snapper-20 inches TL; and vermilion snapper- 12 inches TL. Federal only: hogfish (not pigfish)-12 inches FL; dog, gray, cubera, mahogany, queen, schoolmaster, and yellowtail snappers-12 inches TL; and mutton snapper-16 inches TL.

Harvest Season – Open year round except: wreckfish has a spawning closure from January 15-April 15, shallow water grouper and red porgy have a January-April closure, and greater amberjack has an April commercial closure (no sale) with a season and quota beginning May 1. See the SAFMC website for more details (www.safmc.net).

Size and Age at Maturity - Variable

Historical and Current Maximum Age - Variable

Juvenile Abundance Index - None available

Habits and Habitats – Reef fish occur on hard or "live" bottom on the outer continental shelf.

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