

BLUEFISH

Stock Status – *Viable* – Bluefish are not experiencing overfishing, and are no longer overfished. Fishing mortality has steadily declined since 1991, with biomass estimates increasing since 1997.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 2000-2009 – 2,924,298 lbs./\$838,601

2009 Commercial Landings and Value – 2,360,077 lbs./\$782,597 (quota managed)

Average Recreational Landings 2000-2009 – 1,042,364 lbs., **2009** – 971,132 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (15 lbs.^) 2000-2009 – 5, **2009** – 5

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) – In North Carolina, bluefish are currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)/Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) FMP compliance requirements. The FMP allows annually adjusted, state-by-state commercial quota system and recreational harvest limits to reduce fishing mortality. The 2010 stock assessment update (utilizing 2009 catch data) indicate that bluefish are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, based on the biological reference points developed for review in the 2005 Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC). Estimates from the Age Structured Assessment Program (ASAP) model using state and federal indices show a decreasing trend in fishing mortality, an increasing trend in population biomass, and an increasing trend in population numbers from 1997 to 2007 followed by a decline from 2007 (95 million fish) to 2010 (79.5 million fish).

Research and Data Needs – Validated age data, fishery independent data, commercial bycatch and recreational mortality estimates, exploration of alternative assessment models since the highly migratory nature of bluefish populations and the recruitment dynamics of the species create a unique modeling situation.

Current Regulations – 15 fish/person/day by hook and line. Only 5 fish of the 15 fish limit can be greater than 24 inches total length (TL).

Harvest Season – Open year round (commercial season can close if quota is met)

Size and Age at Maturity – 13 inches fork length (FL)/2 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 14 years/12 years

Juvenile Abundance Index – Unknown

Habits and Habitats - Bluefish are pelagic and important to saltwater fishermen throughout the world. Bluefish school by size and make seasonal migrations north in the spring and south in winter. Large fish tend to congregate in the northern part of the range. There are two spawning groups, one that spawns at sea during the spring and the other spawns at sea in the summer. It has been hypothesized that the success of the spring cohort controls the abundance of adult bluefish.

^Citation weight requirement reduced from 17 lbs. to 15 lbs. in 2008

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