

To: Marine Fisheries Commission

From: Trish Murphey

Subject: Stock Status Report

Date: June 27, 2007

Attached is the Division of Marine Fisheries 2007 Stock Status Report (2007 SSR) with the changes from last year outlined below. The report is annual and intended to serve as a general barometer of the overall health of our fishery resources and is used to prioritize the development of Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) and updates to those plans. This year, stock status definitions were modified to better address the assignment of a stock status to stocks that have unapproved or no stock assessment, or whose stock assessments are too unreliable to determine a status. In addition, the term "Overfished" was changed to "Depleted" to address those stocks that may have other factors besides fishing that may be contributing to low population abundances. Several species stock status changed due to these changes in definitions.

Black Sea Bass North of Hatteras, Scup, Sharks, and Tautog were changed to Concern because of the uncertainty of the stock assessments. The 2006 stock assessment was rejected for Black Sea Bass and overfishing could not be determined. Scup does not have a recent stock assessment and there continues to be uncertainty around the lack of discard data and the use of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center survey data to determine stock status. Sharks were changed to Concern because of the lack of information on the various shark species combined with unreliable stock assessments on Sandbars and Blacktips. The latest Tautog assessment is unable to determine if the stock is overfished. This will be the last year Tautog will be included in this report because North Carolina no longer participates in its management.

Monkfish were shifted from Recovering to Concern because they are behind the 10-year rebuilding schedule. NMFS is in the process of implementing management measures to decrease fishing effort.

Spiny Dogfish were upgraded from Overfished (Depleted) to Recovering because of the nature of their life history and the reduction in number and sizes of females potentially effecting recruitment. They are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

Spot were downgraded from Viable to Concern because of declines in landings and effort. There are also indications of a long, slow decline in the Atlantic coastwide abundance of spot.

Weakfish were changed from Concern to Depleted based on the results of the most recent ASMFC stock assessment. Although there is little evidence of overfishing, the stock is declining because of natural mortality. Management measures to reduce fishing effort should be in place by October.

Bay Scallops were changed from Concern to Depleted based the lack of an active fishery in North Carolina. There is currently no stock assessment available but effects of the red tide, hurricanes and predation have resulted in low recruitment.

Species to watch in 2007-2008 include those species that have NC FMPs being developed (spotted seatrout) and revised (red drum, oyster and clam) as well as those species with upcoming amendments likely through the Federal Councils or ASMFC (monkfish, weakfish, king mackerel, summer flounder).