

SCUP

(06/06 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - Recovering - The stock is not overfished, but cannot be determined if overfishing is occurring due to poor discard estimates. This stock is currently above the minimum stock size threshold; however, it was previously below this level and rebuilding must continue until the stock is at a level consistent with maximum sustainable yield (MSY). Survey observations indicate strong recruitment and some rebuilding of age structure in recent years. Primary concerns are excessive discard of scup and near collapse of the stock. Efforts should continue to further reduce fishing mortality rates and minimize fishery discards.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1996-2005 – 112,316 lbs./\$60,637

2005 Commercial Landings and Value – 352,422 lbs./\$156,920 (quota managed)

Average Recreational Landings 1996-2005 – 1,037 lbs., **2005** – 897 lbs.

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) - In North Carolina, scup is currently included in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)/Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) FMP compliance requirements. The Scup FMP includes a seven-year plan for reducing fishing effort and restoring the stock. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls and minimum fish size limits. The most recent assessment on scup, completed in 2002, indicated scup were no longer overfished, but could not be evaluated with respect to overfishing. The assessment concluded although the “relative exploitation rates have declined in recent years, the absolute value of current fishing mortality (F) cannot be determined.” Therefore, no comparison with the F threshold specified in the FMP could be made, and the rebuilding schedule was disapproved. Discards in the directed scup fishery together with a lack of recent stock assessment information continue to create uncertainty regarding the status of the scup stock. Despite an apparent increase of scup abundance and a decline in relative exploitation rates, the lack of a current assessment led both management authorities to take a precautionary approach in establishing the 2006 Total Allowable Landings (TAL) for scup. The TAL for 2006 was set at 16.27 million lbs., slightly less than in 2005 (16.5 million lbs.), for a 2006 allocation of 12.08 million lbs. commercial (78%) and 4.19 million lbs. recreational (22%). The council also approved development of a framework to amend the FMP to allow for a rollover of the scup quota from the Winter I period (January-April) to Winter II period (November-December), and to allow the transfer of scup at sea. The board and council approved new mesh size requirements with the minimum mesh size for the scup fishery in 2005, at 5 inches, with a minimum length of 75 meshes from the terminus of the net. For small nets with less than 75 meshes codend, the entire net will be 5 inches. The threshold level used to trigger the new minimum mesh size is 200 lbs. from May 1 to October 31.

Research and Data Needs - Continue monitoring catches and increase sampling of strata that have substantial landings of scup. Reliable estimates of scup discards are essential. The uncertainty associated with discards prevents reliable estimates of discard at age in the commercial fishery, and seriously impedes development of a reliable analytic assessment, as well as forecasts of catch and biomass for the stock.

Current Regulations (2006) – Commercial: 9 inches; Recreational: 8 inches/50 per day

Harvest Season (2006) TAL: 16.27 million lbs; 12.08 million lbs. commercial quota, with Winter I (150,000 lbs./week Sun.-Sat.), and Winter II (1,500 lbs./trip) landing limits; 4.19 million lbs. recreational quota. North Carolina commercial and recreational seasons close by proclamation.

Size and Age at Maturity – 50% maturity: 6.1 inches/2 years, both sexes.

Historical and Current Maximum Age - 20 years/10 years

Juvenile Abundance Index - not available

Habits/Habitats - Scup are a schooling continental shelf species found in depths from 40 to 100 fathoms, distributed primarily between Cape Cod, Mass., and Cape Hatteras, N.C., and are assumed to constitute a single unit stock. Scup migrate south and offshore in autumn as the water temperature decreases, arriving in offshore wintering areas by December, but generally not commercially landed in North Carolina until the coldest winter months (January-April). Spawning occurs from May through August and peaks in June. Scup have been characterized as slow-growing, relatively long-lived fish.

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