

## **MONKFISH**

(06/08 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status - *Concern*** - Currently the biomass index for both of the monkfish stocks are behind the 10-year rebuilding schedule (established in the 1999 Fishery Management Plan) and are now both below the minimum biomass threshold and approximately 50% below their annual biomass target index. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) considers the stocks overfished and implemented interim management measures for the 2007 fishing year so that the goals of the 10-year rebuilding program can be met in 2009.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 1998-2007**– 364,901 lbs./\$370,223

**2007 Commercial Landings and Value** – 153,346 lbs./\$188,124 (quota managed)

**Average Recreational Landings 1998-2007** – insufficient data to quantify.

**Status of Fishery Management Plan (FMP)** – In North Carolina, monkfish are currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC)/Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) FMP compliance requirements in federal waters (3–200 miles). The fishery is currently managed under Amendment 2 of the FMP which establishes Northern (NFMA) and Southern (SFMA) fishery management areas with annual quotas for each area, limited entry along with different permit categories for the directed fishery, allocates days at sea fishing for monkfish, daily trip limits and still allows the traditional incidental catch to occur. The monkfish FMP adopted in 1999 outlined a 10-year rebuilding plan for the stock. In response to continued concern over the status of the monkfish stock, NMFS implemented interim management measures effective May 1, 2007 for the 2007 fishing season including limiting days at sea and reducing the allowable incidental catch.

**Research and Data Needs** - reliable estimate of fishing mortality, commercial fishery sampling, determine timing and location of spawning, bycatch and discard estimates, age and growth studies

**Current Regulations** - 17 inches total length (TL) and 11 inches tail length in the NFMA and SFMA.

**Harvest Season** - In North Carolina, large mesh gill net restrictions implemented by NMFS to protect sea turtles and harbor porpoises significantly limit the directed gill net fishery for monkfish. A directed commercial fishery occurs from March 16th through April 14th. During this time, fishermen harvesting monkfish in state waters using gill nets greater than seven inches stretched mesh must hold a valid NC Monkfish Large Mesh Gill Net Permit and limit fishing activity to a one mile wide area extending from two miles seaward of the coastline to three miles seaward of the coastline from the North Carolina/Virginia state line southward to Wimble Shoals (Latitude 35° 30'N).

**Size and Age at Maturity** – males: 14.5 inches/3 years; females: 19 inches/4 years

**Historical and Current Maximum Age** - males: 9 years/females: 11 years

**Juvenile Abundance Index 1998-2007** – N/A

**Habits and Habitats** – Monkfish, also called goosefish or anglerfish, range from the Grand Banks and northern Gulf of St. Lawrence south to Cape Hatteras. Found from inshore out to depths greater than 800 meters, monkfish are most common in depths ranging from 70 to 100 meters. Migration is driven by spawning and feeding. Spawning occurs offshore in early spring in North Carolina and lasts until late September in northern latitudes. Eggs are buoyant and float in huge gelatinous masses until hatching. Monkfish are bottom fish that have a modified first dorsal spine that is used to attract prey. The tip of the spine possesses a red fleshy flap of skin that can be wiggled to lure in prey, which is then engulfed in their large mouth. Prey includes spiny dogfish, skates, weakfish, tautog, flounders and sea birds.

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