

## **SPOTTED SEATROUT**

(06/06 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status -Viable** - Spotted seatrout depend on estuaries throughout their entire life cycle, resulting in concerns about environmental impacts on the stock. Variability in annual reported catch is typical for this species, and parallels climatic conditions of the preceding winter and spring, i.e., low catches following severe winters, with winter cold shock of juveniles and adults cited as a primary factor in local and coastwide declines. Catastrophic mortalities of spotted seatrout have also been attributed to hurricanes, excessive fresh water and red tide conditions.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 1996-2005** - 241,325 lbs./\$299,156

**2005 Commercial Landings and Value** –129,595 lbs./\$173,526

**Average Recreational Landings 1996-2005** – 366,166 lbs., **2005** – 621,016 lbs.

**Average Number of Award Citations (4 lbs.) 1996-2005** – 366, **2005** –290

**Average Recreational Commercial Gear License (RCGL) Landings 2002-2005** – 12,578 lbs., **2005** –9,752 lbs.

**Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)** - In North Carolina, spotted seatrout is currently included in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) FMP compliance requirements. The ASMFC FMP for Spotted Seatrout was initially approved in 1984, and is reviewed every three years. Updates to the plan incorporate new data and research findings, and assess the status of stocks and the fisheries. Amendment 1, approved by the ASMFC Policy Board on November 1991, added the objective of maintaining a spawning potential ratio (SPR) of at least 20% to minimize the possibility of recruitment failure.

**Data/Research Needs** - Validated index of juvenile abundance, fishery independent data, commercial and recreational mortality estimates, and stock assessment.

**Current Regulations (2006)** – 12-inch/10-fish bag limit per person per day taken by hook and line

**Harvest Season** - year round

**Size and Age at Maturity** – 7-9 inches fork length (FL)/less than 1 year  
(Males mature at a younger age, smaller size, and earlier in the season, than females).

**Historical and Current Maximum Age** – 12 years/9 years

**Juvenile Abundance Index** - unknown

**Habits/Habitats** - Estuarine dependent member of the *Sciaenidae* family that includes kingfish, spot, croaker, red drum, black drum, and weakfish. Peak catches occur in the fall, although May and June are also productive months. North Carolina spotted seatrout have a protracted spawning season, extending from late April through early October. Juveniles are dependent on estuarine seagrass habitat as critical nursery areas.

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