

STRIPED BASS - Central/Southern Management Area (CSMA)

Stock Status - *Depleted* – Surveys on the spawning grounds show very low relative abundance and truncated age structures, with very few older fish in the population. Due to lack of funding, there are additional dependent and independent data that must be collected before an accurate stock assessment can be made.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 2000-2009 – 27,511 lbs./\$43,424

2009 Commercial Landings and Value – 24,507 lbs./\$55,830 (quota managed)

Average Recreational Landings 2004-2009 – 10,410 lbs., **2009** – 3,062 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (35 lbs./45 inches[^]) 1999-2009*– 327 (151 releases), **2009***–137 (3 releases)

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) – An amended N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass FMP was adopted in May 2004 by the N. C. Marine Fisheries Commission to address the striped bass fisheries in all internal coastal waters of the state. A revision of the N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass FMP is currently underway. A proclamation, effective May 1, 2008, for internal fishing waters west of the 76° 28.0000'W longitude line requires the use of a 3 foot tie down in large mesh (>5 in stretch mesh) gill nets and the maintenance of a minimum distance from shore of 50 yards for these nets, except RCGL large mesh nets may be set within 50 yards of shore if attended at all times. These restrictions are in place after the commercial TAC is met (spring) through 31 December of each year. Regulations effective July 1, 2008 for the recreational sector: constrain the harvest to the months of October-April and lower the creel limit to 2 fish in internal coastal waters; maintain the 18 inch TL minimum size and introduce a slot limit of 22-27 inches in joint and inland waters; and place a moratorium on the possession of striped bass taken from joint waters of the Cape Fear River for both commercial and recreational sectors.

Research and Data Needs – Expand commercial, recreational, and independent sampling in the CSMA. Determine age structure of striped bass in the CSMA.

Current Regulations –

No harvest in the Cape Fear River and tributaries

Commercial and Recreational 18 inches TL minimum size,

Commercial quota of 25,000 during a Spring Season (March-April); season opens and closes by proclamation

Recreational CSMA internal coastal waters–2 fish limit/ gear restrictions

Recreational CSMA joint waters- 22-27 inches total length prohibition/ 2 fish limit/ gear restrictions

Harvest Season – Recreational CSMA internal coastal and joint waters – October 1 through April 30

Size and Age at Maturity – Males: 12 – 18 inches TL/2 – 3 years; Females: 18 – 24 inches TL/3 – 6 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 29 years/ 18 years

Juvenile Abundance Index – Not available for CSMA

Habits and Habitats - Striped bass are anadromous, spending the majority of their adult life stage in the high salinity waters of the near-shore ocean and estuaries, migrating to fresh water

to spawn in the spring. Striped bass require flowing, fresh water habitats in order to spawn successfully, allowing the eggs to remain suspended until they hatch, and to transport larvae to the nursery areas. Spawning takes place during late April until early June. North Carolina is host to several different stocks of striped bass. One is the Atlantic migratory stock that often over-winters off the Outer Banks. These striped bass originate principally from the Chesapeake Bay, Delaware and Hudson River systems. They remain in their natal systems from two to three years then begin migrating along the Atlantic coast, northward in the summer and southward during the winter. The Albemarle Sound-Roanoke River area supports the largest spawning population in North Carolina. Other populations are found in the Neuse, Tar/Pamlico, and Cape Fear rivers.

*Includes ASMA, CSMA, and the Atlantic Ocean

^Citation requirement changes effective 2008

For more information on CSMA striped bass, contact Eric Fitzpatrick at Eric.Fitzpatrick@ncdenr.gov (800-338-7804 or 252-946-6481).