

## **HARD CLAM**

(06/09 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status - *Unknown*** - Little data on hard clams have been collected in North Carolina. Commercial landings are below the 10-year average. Recreational landings are unknown.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 1999-2008** – 535,407 lbs. of meat/ \$3,402,539

**2008 Commercial Landings and Value** – 381,411 lbs. of meat/ \$2,351,527

**Average Recreational Landings 1999-2008** - unknown, **2008** - unknown

**Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)** - A state FMP was approved in 2001 by the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission and Amendment 1 was approved in 2008. Amendment 1 recommended that the hard clam fishery continue to harvest at current daily harvest limits, eliminate the mechanical clam harvest rotation in Pamlico Sound and institute a resting period in the northern Core Sound mechanical clam harvest area, and develop sampling programs to collect information necessary for the completion of a hard clam stock assessment.

**Data and Research Needs** - Expand shellfish mapping, determine abundance estimates and collect recreational harvest data. Stock identification, recruitment and effects of cultch research studies needed.

**Current Minimum Size Limit** - 1-inch thick

**Harvest Season** - Daily commercial harvest limits are no more than 6,250 clams (25 bags at 250 clams per bag) per fishing operation in any coastal fishing waters regardless of the harvest methods employed. By hand, the season is open year round. Mechanical harvest season is December 1 - March 31 and is opened by proclamation. A daily harvest limit of no more than 3,750 clams (15 bags at 250 clams per bag) is allowed per commercial fishing operation in North River, Newport River, and Bogue Sound. White Oak River, the Intracoastal Waterway of Onslow and Pender counties (Marker 65 to the BC Marker at Banks Channel), and New River are rotated on a yearly basis with maximum daily limits of 6,250 clams (25 bags at 250 clams per bag) per operation. Core Sound is divided into two areas; the northern area is open and closed every other year and the southern area is open each year, with a daily harvest limit of 5,000 clams per operation. Recreational harvest limits are 100 clams per person per day and no more than 200 clams per vessel.

**Size and Age at Maturity** - 1.5 inches, (shell height)/ 1.5 years

**Historical and Current Maximum Age** - 45 years/ unknown

**Juvenile Abundance Indices Average 1999-2008** unknown, **2008** - unknown

**Habits and Habitats** - Hard clams are mostly estuarine dependent mollusks found in sandy and vegetated bottoms. Spawning occurs from May through November when water temperatures reach between 68 degrees and 86 degrees Fahrenheit. The larvae go through several pelagic stages before settling onto a suitable substrate. During the juvenile stages, hard clams tend to be dominantly male and then become either male or female as they mature into adults. Maturity is determined by size and therefore dependent on growth. Growth rates are highly variable because of temperature, food availability, and genetic disposition. Hard clams are suspension-feeding bivalves and feed on diatoms.

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