

MEMORANDUM

TO: Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: Louis Daniel

SUBJECT: Stock Status Report

DATE: June 28, 2005

Attached is the Division of Marine Fisheries 2005 Stock Status Report. Changes from last year's report are outlined below.

Striped mullet were upgraded from **Concern** to **Recovering** based on the most recent NCDMF stock assessment, which determined the stock has not been overfished since 1998. There is concern, however, because fishermen target roe mullet and there are limited age classes available in the stock.

Weakfish were downgraded from **Viable** to **Overfished** based on the latest Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission stock assessment. Last year, we indicated weakfish were a species to watch. Coastwide commercial landings have declined the last several years, while recreational landings in North Carolina have increased. Fishing mortality rates have remained low, but the total mortality of the stock has increased, resulting in biomass falling below the threshold level. The ASMFC Weakfish Technical Committee will be developing harvest reduction strategies to address declining population trends.

Summer flounder were moved from the **Viable** to the **Concern** category as a result of the most recent ASMFC/Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council assessment that indicates overfishing is occurring. The impacts of the assessment could result in tightening of restrictions on this species.

Sharks were upgraded from **Overfished** to **Recovering** based on the National Marine Fisheries Service large coastal shark stock assessment. Blacktip and sandbar sharks are the two primary species harvested by North Carolina fishermen. Blacktips were determined to be rebuilt and sand bars are not overfished. The status of other members of the large coastal shark complex is unknown because they are not individually assessed. The assessment concludes the overall large coastal shark resource has improved since 1998. The status of small coastal sharks is currently under review and pelagic sharks are unknown.

Stocks in the process of FMP developed are designated as **Species to Watch**, they include:

- Shrimp, striped mullet and kingfishes – state FMPs being developed;
- Red drum and river herring – state FMPs scheduled for 5-year review; and
- Snapper-grouper and weakfish – federal or regional FMP amendments likely.