AMERICAN OYSTER
(06/99 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status-- Overfished-Long term decline probably caused by over harvesting, habitat disturbances, and pollution. Most recently stressed by Dermo (Perkinsus marinus) infections

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1988-1998--340,333 lbs. (meats), $1,135,884

1998 Commercial Landings and Value--236,043 lbs.(meats), $974,381

Average Recreational Landings 1988-1998 and 1998--unknown

Average Number of Award Citations 1988-1998 and 1998--N/A

Status of Fisheries Management Plan--Draft Plan

Research and Data Needs--Habitat size and location; oyster density within habitat; fishing mortality and substrate disturbance caused by different harvest techniques; CPUE; parasite: life history, means of transmission, and possible control methods; effects of pollutants; effects of bottom disturbing fishing gear; accurate landing data for commercial and recreational harvest from public and private bottom

Current Minimum Size Limit--3 inch shell length

Harvest Season--Open season Oct. 15 through May 15, Director may impose any or all of the following restrictions: 1. Specify days of the week harvesting will be allowed 2. Specify areas
3. Specify means and methods which may be employed in the taking
4. Specify the time period
5. Specify the quantity, but shall not exceed possession of more than 50 bushels
6. Specify the minimum size limit by shell length, but not less than 2 1/2 inches

Size and Age at Maturity-----Approximately 2" shell length, during their second growing season, but can be sexually mature 4 to 12 weeks after settlement.

Historical and Current Maximum Age--40 years, unknown

Juvenile Abundance Indices Averages 1972-1998 and 1998--N/A (Spatfall information on cultch planting sites available on request)

Habits/Habitats--Oysters are bivalve mollusks residing in intertidal or subtidal estuarine environments. A relatively clean firm substrate where water circulation provides sufficient food is necessary for oysters to attach, survive and grow to market size (3 in.). Optimal salinity and temperature ranges are 12 to25 ppt. and 10 to 26 degrees C (50 to 79 degrees F) respectively. Spawning is triggered by increases in temperature (>20 degrees C), and salinity (>10 ppt.) and occurs in N.C. from May through September.

For more information, see DMF Species Leads page