

BLACK SEA BASS

(06/98 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status-- Stressed-Recovering south of Cape Hatteras. Depressed north of Cape Hatteras. The spawner per recruit relationship level of the south Atlantic stock is at 26% and the target is 30%. The north of Hatteras stock has a very truncated age distribution. The northern stock is over-exploited and at a low biomass level.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1987-1997-- 797,361 lb (>500,000 lbs caught south of Hatteras), \$995,406

1997 Commercial Landings and Value-- 766,839 lb, \$1,124,024

Average Recreational Landings 1987-1997 and 1997-- 311,090 lb, 152,225 lb

Average Number of Citations 1987-1997-- 118, 1997 Citations---- 34

Status of Fisheries Management Plans-- The stock north of Cape Hatteras is currently managed under the joint ASMFC/MAFMC Fishery Management Plan for Black Sea Bass. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls, escape vents for pots, and minimum fish size limits. South of Cape Hatteras the species will be managed by the SAFMC under Amendment 9 to the Snapper-Grouper FMP by minimum mesh sizes and bag limits.

Research and Data Needs-- continue monitoring of catches.

Current minimum size limit--10 inches (TL) north of Cape Hatteras, 8 inches (TL) south of Cape Hatteras. The size limit for black sea bass south of Cape Hatteras is expected to increase to 10 inches in the fall of 1998 with a 20 fish bag limit.

Harvest Season-- North of Cape Hatteras the commercial season closes after quota is met. Recreational season is closed from August 1 through August 15 north of Hatteras.

Size at maturity, age at maturity-- 7.7 inches TL, 2 years old

Historical maximum age, current maximum age--20 years old, 8 years old

Juvenile index -- not available

Habits/Habitats--Black sea bass reverse sex from female to male between the ages of 2 and 4. Black sea bass north and south of Cape Hatteras are recognized as different stocks. Black sea bass inhabit irregular hard-bottom areas such as wrecks, artificial reefs, reefs, and rock outcroppings. Sea bass south of Cape Hatteras are found inshore of snappers, groupers, grunts and porgies. Sea bass north of Cape Hatteras move inshore and north in the summer and offshore and south in the summer.

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