

BLACK SEA BASS

(06/07 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status –

Concern - North of Hatteras - The average biomass index from the Northeast Fishery Science Center (NEFSC) 2006 spring survey biomass index (0.98 kg/tow) is above the biomass threshold (0.90 kg.tow) and therefore the stock is not overfished. However, Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) panelists rejected the 2006 Stock Assessment based on concerns about the soundness of the current biological reference points. Overfishing is unknown because discard losses in the commercial fisheries are not estimated and remain an uncertain component of the fishery.

Depleted - South of Hatteras - Based on recent South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) stock assessment, the spawning stock biomass is 22 % and the southern stock is heavily exploited with a decline over time and a 62% reduction in harvest is needed.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1997-2006 – 230,381 lbs./\$495,377 (N of Hatteras); 446,760 lbs./\$669,211 (S of Hatteras)

2006 Commercial Landings and Value – 346,920 lbs./\$904,347 (N of Hatteras, quota managed); 443,547 lbs./\$835,876 (S of Hatteras)

Average Recreational Landings 1997-2006 - 170,909 lbs., **2006** – 154,311 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (4 lbs.) 1997-2006 –126, **2006** -157

Status of Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) - In North Carolina, the stock north of Cape Hatteras is currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission/Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council FMP compliance requirements. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls, escape vents for pots, and minimum fish size limits. Amendment 13 to the FMP established the implementation of a state-specific allocation of the coastwide quota. The council and board recommended a decrease in the coastwide total allowable landings (TAL) from 8.0 million lbs. in 2006 to only 6.5 million lbs. for 2007. The 1.5 million pound reduction in the TAL for this fishing year was based on questions raised in the June 2006 Stock Assessment Review concerning the soundness of the current biological reference points for management purposes and the uncertainty of the survey estimates. Based on landings data from 1983-1992, 49% of the TAL is allocated to the commercial fishery and 51% is allocated to the recreational fishery. As such, North Carolina's preliminary commercial quota (11%) for north of Cape Hatteras for 2007 is ~ 350,000 lbs. The Commission and Council approved increases in the minimum sizes for circular vents (now 2.5" in diameter) and the number of vents in traps and pots, and all traps and pots will be required to have at least two vents in the parlor portion of the trap to help increase escapement of sub-legal fish (implemented by January 1, 2007). Black sea bass found south of Cape Hatteras are currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to SAFMC FMP compliance requirements. Amendment 13C was approved by SAFMC in December 2005 and became effective in October 2006. It established a commercial quota and additional pot restrictions as well as recreational allocation and increased the recreational minimum size and reduced the bag limit.

Research and Data Needs - continue monitoring of catches, continue federal tagging projects, develop age information, alternative biological reference points.

Current Regulations (2007) – recreational: 12 inches total length (TL) minimum size/25-fish bag limit north of Cape Hatteras, 11 inches (TL) minimum size/15-fish bag limit south of Cape Hatteras. Commercial: 11 inches north of Cape Hatteras, 10 inches south of Cape Hatteras.

Harvest Season - North of Cape Hatteras, the commercial season closes after quota is met.

Size and age at maturity - 7.7 inches/2 years

Historical and Current maximum age - 20 years/8 years

Juvenile Abundance Index - not available

Habits and Habitats - Black sea bass change sex from female to male between the ages of 2 years and 4 years. 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, reef and rock outcroppings. Black sea bass north of Cape Hatteras move inshore and north in the summer and offshore and south in the winter. Black sea bass south of Cape Hatteras are generally found closer to shore than snappers, groupers, grunts and porgies.

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