

SPOTTED SEATROUT

(06/05 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status -Viable - Spotted seatrout depend on estuaries throughout their entire life cycle, resulting in concerns about environmental impacts on the stock. Variability in annual reported catch is typical for this species, and parallels climatic conditions of the preceding winter and spring, i.e., low catches following severe winters, with winter cold shock of juveniles and adults cited as a primary factor in local and coastwide declines. Catastrophic mortalities of spotted seatrout have also been attributed to hurricanes, excessive fresh water and red tide conditions.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1995-2004 - 285,795 lbs./\$345,209

2004 Commercial Landings and Value -130,961 lbs./\$172,033

Average Recreational Landings 1995-2004 - 349,385 lbs., **2004** – 379,784 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations 1995-2004 – 386, **2004** – 378

Average RCGL Landings 2002-2004 - 13,520 lbs., **2004** -7,093 lbs.

Status of Fisheries Management Plan - In North Carolina, spotted seatrout is currently included in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to ASMFC FMP compliance requirements. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Spotted Seatrout was initially approved in 1984, and is reviewed every three years. Updates to the plan incorporate new data and research findings, and assess the status of stocks and the fisheries. Amendment 1, approved by the ASMFC Policy Board on November 1991, added the objective of maintaining a spawning potential ratio (SPR) of at least 20 percent to minimize the possibility of recruitment failure.

Data/Research Needs - Validated index of juvenile abundance, fishery independent data, commercial and recreational mortality estimates, and stock assessment.

Current Regulations (2005) – 12-inch/10-fish bag limit per person per day taken by hook and line.

Harvest Season (2005) - Open year round

Size and Age at Maturity – 7 inches-9 inches FL / less than 1 year
(Males mature at a younger age, smaller size, and earlier in the season, than females).

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 12 years/ 9 years

Juvenile Abundance Indices - unknown

Habits/Habitats - Estuarine dependent member of the Sciaenidae family that includes kingfish, spot, croaker, red drum, black drum, and weakfish. Peak catches occur in the fall, although May and June are also productive months. North Carolina spotted seatrout have a protracted spawning season, extending from late April through early October. Juveniles are dependent on estuarine seagrass habitat as critical nursery areas.

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