

## **SCUP**

(06/05 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status - Recovering** - The stock is not overfished, but cannot be determined if overfishing is occurring due to poor discard estimates. This stock is currently above the minimum stock size threshold; however, it was previously below this level and rebuilding must continue until the stock is at a level consistent with MSY. Survey observations indicate strong recruitment and some rebuilding of age structure in recent years. Primary concerns are excessive discard of scup and near collapse of the stock. Efforts should continue to further reduce fishing mortality rates and minimize fishery discards.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 1995-2004** - 78,636 lbs./\$45,510

**2004 Commercial Landings and Value** - 523,554 lbs./\$332,019

**Average Recreational Landings 1995-2004** - 965 lbs., **2004** – 293 lbs.

**Status of Fisheries Management Plan** - In North Carolina, scup is currently included in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to ASMFC/MAFMC FMP compliance requirements. The Scup FMP includes a seven-year plan for reducing fishing effort and restoring the stock. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls and minimum fish size limits. The most recent assessment on scup, completed in 2002, indicated scup were no longer overfished, but could not be evaluated with respect to overfishing. The assessment concluded although the “relative exploitation rates have declined in recent years, the absolute value of current fishing mortality (F) cannot be determined.” Therefore, no comparison with the F threshold specified in the FMP could be made, and the rebuilding schedule was disapproved. The TAL for 2005 was set at 16.5 million lbs., the same as in 2004. The TAL was then adjusted for overages and/or research set-aside, for a 2005 allocation of 12.35 million lbs. commercial (78 percent) and 3.99 million lbs. recreational (22 percent). The council also approved development of a framework to amend the FMP to allow for a rollover of the scup quota from the Winter I period (January-April) to Winter II period (November-December), change the starting date of the summer period (May-October) for scup from May 1 to April 15, and allow the transfer of scup at sea. The board and council approved new mesh size requirements with the minimum mesh size for the scup fishery in 2005, at 5 inches, with a minimum length of 75 meshes from the terminus of the net. For small nets with less than 75 meshes codend, the entire net will be 5 inches. The threshold level used to trigger the new minimum mesh size is 200 lbs. from May1 to October 31.

**Research and Data Needs** - Continue monitoring catches and increase sampling of strata that have substantial landings of scup. Reliable estimates of scup discards are essential. The uncertainty associated with discards prevents reliable estimates of discard at age in the commercial fishery, and seriously impedes development of a reliable analytic assessment, as well as forecasts of catch and biomass for the stock.

**Current Limits (2005)** – Commercial: 9 inches; Recreational: 8 inches/50 per day

**Harvest Season-2005 TAL:** 16.5 million lbs. adjusted commercial quota, with Winter I (150,000 lbs./week Sun.-Sat.), and Winter II (1,500 lbs./trip) landing limits; 3.99 million lbs. recreational quota. North Carolina commercial and recreational seasons close by proclamation.

**Size and Age at Maturity** - 50 percent maturity: 6.1 inches/2 years, both sexes.

**Historical and Current Maximum Age** - 20 years/10 years

**Juvenile Abundance Index** - not available

**Habits/Habitats** - Scup are a schooling continental shelf species found in depths from 40 fathoms to 100 fathoms, distributed primarily between Cape Cod, Mass.. and Cape Hatteras, N.C., and are assumed to constitute a single unit stock. Scup migrate south and offshore in autumn as the water temperature decreases, arriving in offshore wintering areas by December, but generally not commercially landed in North Carolina until the coldest winter months (January-April). Spawning occurs from May through August and peaks in June. Scup have been characterized as slow-growing, relatively long-lived fish.

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