

## **SUMMER FLOUNDER**

(06/07 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status - Concern** - The 2006 Northeast Fisheries Science Center Stock Assessment indicates the stock is not overfished, but overfishing is occurring based on the current biological reference points. Fishing mortality has steadily decreased and spawning stock biomass has steadily increased from the early 1990s to 2004; fishing mortality has slightly increased and spawning stock biomass has slightly decreased since 2004.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 1997-2006** – 3,410,221 lbs. (quota-managed)/ \$5,935,712

**2006 Commercial Landings and Value** –3,966,148 lbs. (quota-managed)/\$8,418,033

**Average Recreational Landings 1997-2006** – 296,968 lbs., **2006** – 203,582 lbs.

**Average Number of Award Citations (5 lbs.) 1997-2006\*** – 394, **2006\*** – 344

**Average Recreational Commercial Gear Landings 2002-2006\*** – 75,608 lbs., **2006\*** – 45,535 lbs.

**Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)** – In North Carolina, summer flounder is currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)/Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) FMP compliance requirements. Currently managed under Amendment 12 to the joint ASMFC/MAFMC FMP for Summer Flounder. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls, minimum fish size limits, recreational bag limits, and a moratorium on new entrants into the commercial fishery.

**Research and Data Needs** – Discard mortality estimates, age comparisons of northern and southern fish using scales and otoliths, continued expansion of observer coverage in the flounder trawl and scallop dredge fisheries.

**Current Regulations (2007)** – Commercial: 14-inch minimum size limit in internal and ocean waters. Closed season in Atlantic Ocean through November 1, once 80 percent of quota is harvested. Bycatch trip limit of 100 lbs. during closed season. A "License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean" is required to land more than 100 lb. per trip.

**Recreational:** 14-inch/8-fish limit in internal waters and 14 ½ -inch minimum size limit/8 fish limit in ocean waters with no closed season.

**Harvest Season** — January until 80 percent of the quota is harvested (March-April) and November to December.

**Size and Age at Maturity** – 11 inches/1.5 years (females), 10 inches/1 year (males)

**Historical and Current Maximum Age** – 15 years/11 years

**Juvenile Abundance Index 1997-2006^#** – 11.2, **2006^** – 2.0 (not validated)

**Habits and Habitats** – Summer flounder are estuarine dependent members of the left-eyed flounder family that also include southern flounder and gulf flounder. Summer flounder migrate offshore and north during winter and early spring, and inshore and south during summer and fall. Summer flounder spawn from November through March when water temperatures are between 53° and 67°. Larval summer flounder enter inlets and settle on sandy bottoms in higher-salinity areas of estuaries. After or towards the end of their first year, summer flounder move into ocean waters to spawn and join the coastal migratory groups.

\*Includes southern, summer and gulf flounders, but the majority are southern flounder.

^ Arithmetic mean from Pamlico Sound Survey (June only)

# 1999 index excluded because sampling conducted in July

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