

## **ATLANTIC STURGEON**

**Stock Status – Depleted** – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is responsible for managing this species and considers the stocks to be depleted along the Atlantic coast. Landings have been low since 1960. In 1991, the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission made it illegal to possess sturgeon in North Carolina. Atlantic sturgeon is currently a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The National Marine Fisheries Service is currently reviewing the status of the stock to meet statutory deadlines for a petition to list Atlantic sturgeon as endangered or threatened submitted by the Natural Resources Defense Council in October 2009.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 2000-2009** – Landings prohibited.

**2009 Commercial Landings and Value** – Landings prohibited.

**Average Recreational Landings 2000-2009** – Landings prohibited.

**Average Number of Award Citations 2000-2009** – Landings prohibited.

**Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)** – In North Carolina, sturgeon are currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to ASMFC FMP compliance requirements. In 1990, ASMFC adopted an FMP for Atlantic Sturgeon. The goal was to restore sturgeon to fishable abundance throughout its range. As of April 1998, all Atlantic coast states had implemented total closures in state waters. An amendment to the plan was passed in June 1998. Objectives of the amendment are to establish at least 20 protected year classes of females in each spawning stock. In May 1999, the National Marine Fisheries Service extended the ban on sturgeon fishing into federal waters. Addendum 1 to Amendment 1 (passed in 2001) allowed for the importation of non-indigenous Atlantic sturgeon and to permit development of private aquaculture facilities for this species.

**Research and Data Needs** – Monitor population status through juvenile indices and abundance and age composition of spawning population, characterize the incidence of bycatch in various fisheries and associated mortalities, conduct tag/recapture studies for estimates of bycatch loss

**Current Regulations** – None; No possession of sturgeon is allowed.

**Harvest Season** – None; Total coastwide moratorium.

**Size and Age at Maturity** – Not known for North Carolina. Males in Florida first mature at 7-10 years, whereas males in the Hudson River mature at age 12 or older. Youngest females in the Hudson River were 18-19 years; average age was 20 years. Mature males in New York were 47-78 inches FL and females were 71-94 inches FL.

**Historical and Current Maximum Age** – 60 years/40 years.

**Juvenile Abundance Index** – None available.

**Habits and Habitats** – Atlantic sturgeon are an anadromous species that require upriver access to fresh water to have spawning success. Juveniles generally remain in rivers and estuaries for first six years before migrating into the ocean to mature.

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