HARD CLAM
(06/07 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - ***Unknown*** - Little data on hard clams have been collected in North Carolina. Commercial landings are below the 10-year average. Recreational landings are unknown.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1997-2006 - 593,243 lbs. of meat/ $3,850,735

2006 Commercial Landings and Value - 421,834 lbs. of meat/ $2,629,137

Average Recreational Landings 1997-2006 – Unknown, **2006** - Unknown

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) - A state FMP was approved in 2001 by the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission. An update of the 2001 FMP is in development and scheduled for completion in April 2008.

Research and Data Needs - Expand shellfish mapping, determine abundance estimates, and collect recreational harvest data. Stock identification, recruitment, and effects of cultch research studies are needed.

Current Regulations (2007) - 1-inch thick size limit

Harvest Season - Daily commercial harvest limits are no more than 6,250 clams (25 bags at 250 clams per bag) per fishing operation in any coastal fishing waters regardless of the harvest methods employed. By hand, the season is open year round. Mechanical harvest season is December 1 - March 31 and is opened by proclamation. A daily harvest limit of no more than 3,750 clams (15 bags at 250 clams per bag) is allowed per commercial fishing operation in North River, Newport River, and Bogue Sound. White Oak River, the Intracoastal Waterway of Onslow and Pender counties (Marker 65 to the BC Marker at Banks Channel), and New River are rotated on a yearly basis with maximum daily limits of 6,250 clams (25 bags at 250 clams per bag) per operation. Since 2001, Core Sound has been divided into two areas and the northern area is rotated open and close every two years with a new area in Pamlico Sound with a daily harvest limit of 5,000 clams per operation. The rest of the mechanical harvest area in Core Sound is open each year during the season and is limited to 5,000 clams per operation. Recreational harvest limits are 100 clams per person per day and no more than 200 clams per vessel.

Size and Age at Maturity - 1.5 inches, (shell height)/ 1.5 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age - 45 years/ Unknown

Juvenile Abundance Index 1997-2006 and **2006** - Unknown

Habits and Habitats - Hard clams are mostly estuarine dependent mollusks found in sandy and vegetated bottoms. Spawning occurs from May through November when water temperatures reach between 68 degrees and 86 degrees Fahrenheit. The larvae go through several pelagic stages before settling onto a suitable substrate. During the juvenile stages, hard clams tend to be dominantly male and then become either male or female as they mature into adults. Maturity is determined by size and therefore dependent on growth. Growth rates are highly variable because of temperature, food availability, and genetic disposition. Hard clams are suspension-feeding bivalves and feed on diatoms.

For more information, see DMF Species Leads page