

MONKFISH

(06/04 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status –*Recovering*—The most recent three year running average (2001 – 2003) biomass index for monkfish from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NESFC) fall bottom trawl survey shows overfishing is not occurring.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1994-2003 – 496,556 lbs., \$452,236

2003 Commercial Landings and Value – 335,349 lbs., \$314,356

Average Recreational Landings and Value 1994-2003 – Unknown **2003**—Unknown

Status of Fishery Management Plan –Currently managed under the joint NEFMC and MAFMC Fishery Management Plan for monkfish. It establishes Northern and Southern fishery management areas with annual quotas for each, limited entry along with different permit categories for the directed fishery, allocates days at sea fishing for monkfish, daily trip limits, and still allows the traditional incidental catch to occur.

Data/Research Needs — Reliable estimate of fishing mortality, commercial fishery sampling, determine timing and location of spawning, bycatch and discard estimates, age and growth studies.

Current Size Limits — 21 inches total length and 14 inches tail length in the Southern Fishery Management Area; 17 inches total length and 11 inches tail length in the Northern Fishery Management Area.

Harvest Season –The North Carolina commercial fishery occurs from January to April. Large mesh gill net restrictions in place to protect sea turtles and harbor porpoises significantly limit the directed gill net fishery.

Size and Age at Maturity — Males at 14.5 inches TL and age 3; females at 19 inches TL and age 4

Historical Maximum Age — Males at age 9 and females at age 11

Juvenile Abundance Index Average 1994-2003 – Unknown **2003**—Unknown

Habits/Habitats –Monkfish, also called goosfish or anglerfish, range from the Grand Banks and northern Gulf of St. Lawrence south to Cape Hatteras. Found from inshore out to depths greater than 800 m, monkfish are most common in depths ranging from 70 to 100 m. Migratory movement is driven by spawning and feeding. Spawning occurs offshore in early spring in North Carolina and lasts until late September in northern latitudes. Eggs are buoyant and float in huge gelatinous masses until hatching. Monkfish are bottom fish that have a modified first dorsal spine which is used to attract prey. The tip of the spine possesses a red fleshy flap of skin that can be wiggled to lure in prey, which is then engulfed in their large mouth. Prey items are numerous, some of which include spiny dogfish, skates, weakfish, tautog, flounders and sea birds.

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