

## **SOUTHERN FLOUNDER**

(06/07 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status - *Depleted*** - Based on the 2004 stock assessment, the southern flounder stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 1997-2006** – 2,994,765 lbs./\$5,261,551

**2006 Commercial Landings and Value** – 2,297,531 lbs./\$4,870,780

**Average Recreational Angler Landings 1997-2006**– 247,877 lbs., **2006** – 357,588 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)** - A FMP for southern flounder was developed by the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries in February 2005. The federal FMP for summer flounder also affects the harvest of this species.

**Research and Data Needs** – Fisheries-independent adult abundance index, at-sea observer coverage of the estuarine gill net fishery, bycatch mortality estimates from all fisheries, verification of escapement of older flounder from the fishery, participation and harvest estimates for the recreational gig fishery, and reproductive ecology.

**Current Regulations (2007)** – Commercial: 14-inch minimum size limit in internal and ocean waters, closed season in internal waters from December 1-31; no trip limits in internal waters and a 100 lb. trip limit in ocean waters unless the individual has a License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean. Various gear regulations to minimize undersized southern flounder bycatch implemented in the fall of 2005. Recreational: 14-inch minimum size limit/8 fish creel limit for internal waters and 14 ½ -inch minimum size limit/8 fish limit in ocean waters with no closed season.

**Harvest Season** — January to November (closed season in December) with peak catches from Sept. to Nov.

**Size and Age at Maturity** – 13 inches/1 year (females), 10 inches/1 year (males)

**Historical and Current Maximum Age** – 9 years/ age data not available for 2005 or 2006

**Juvenile Abundance Index 1997-2006\*\*#** – 2.3, **2006\*\*** – 1.1 (not validated)

**Habits and Habitats** – Southern flounder are estuarine dependent members of the left-eyed flounder family that include summer flounder and Gulf flounder. Southern flounder migrate offshore and south during winter and early spring and inshore and north during late spring, summer, and fall. Southern flounder spawn in near shore continental shelf waters from November through March. Young fish enter inlets and settle on muddy bottoms in lower-salinity areas of estuaries. Unlike summer flounder, most adult southern flounder return to North Carolina's estuaries after spawning.

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

\*\*Arithmetic mean from Pamlico Sound Survey

# 1999 index excluded because sampling conducted in July

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