

RED DRUM

Stock Status - *Recovering* – The most recent stock assessment, conducted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in 2009, indicates that current regulations have been effective at preventing overfishing. The adult spawning stock continues to be protected by prohibiting harvest of red drum greater than 27 inches total length (TL).

Average Commercial Landings and Value 2000-2009 – 161,229 lbs./\$215,877

2009 Commercial Landings and Value – 194,296 lbs./\$316,046

Average Recreational Landings 2000-2009 – 226,257 lbs. **2009** – 358,188 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (40-inches release only) 2000-2009 – 1,301 **2009** – 752

Status of Fishery Management Plan (FMP) – The most recent stock assessment for red drum was completed in 2009 by the ASMFC. Results indicate that current regulations in place since the late 1990's have effectively eliminated overfishing of red drum in North Carolina. The N.C. Red Drum FMP began development in 1998 and was the catalyst for the current regulations. More recently, Amendment 1 to the N.C. Red Drum FMP (2008) was approved and required no further changes to harvest limits. Steps were taken, however, to reduce the impact of mortality associated with regulatory discards. These included, requiring circle hooks in some of the adult red drum recreational fisheries and expanding the current small mesh gill net attendance requirements in the commercial fishery. In addition to the state FMP, ASMFC Amendment 2 to the Red Drum FMP (June 2002) requires states to implement and maintain management measures that prevent overfishing and achieve optimum yield. Regulations enacted as part of the original N.C. Red Drum FMP have satisfied this requirement.

Research and Data Needs – Commercial discard estimates, information on the size distribution of recreational releases, fisheries independent data on recruitment of juvenile fish to adults, assessment of adult stocks, estimates of fecundity for females, and validation of sub-adult abundance indices.

Current Regulations – 18 inches total length TL minimum and 27 inches TL maximum for recreational and commercial fishermen; 1 fish/day for recreational anglers. The commercial fishery is limited to a bycatch allowance that is set by proclamation. Check with NCDMF for the most recent proclamation on red drum. The commercial fishing season is monitored from September 1 to August 31 with a 250,000-lb. cap. No possession of fish greater than 27 inches TL is allowed.

Harvest Season – Year round

Size and Age at Maturity – 30-32 inches TL/3-4 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 62 years

Juvenile Abundance Index 2000-2009 – 4.2, **2009** – 2.0

Habits and Habitats – Red drum are estuarine dependent members of the drum family that includes Atlantic croaker, spot, black drum, weakfish, and spotted sea trout. Large red drum (up to 90 lbs.) inhabit the coastal waters of North Carolina throughout the year, often observed in the surf during the spring and fall seasons and commonly found in the Pamlico Sound during the summer months. Spawning takes place in the fall around coastal inlets. Larval and juvenile drum utilize various shallow estuarine habitats in coastal sounds and rivers during the first few years of life. Upon maturity, red drum move out of the estuaries to join the adult spawning stock in the ocean.

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