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NO CHANGES IN N.C. MARINE FISHERIES 2008 STOCK STATUS REPORT

RALEIGH – Striped bass populations are still doing well in the ocean and in the Albemarle Sound area.

Bluefish stocks are still viable, too.

Red drum stocks are still recovering. Bay scallop populations are still depleted.

No important marine fisheries species is doing better or worse than it was last year, according to the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries 2008 Stock Status Report. The report was released today at a N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission meeting in Raleigh.

“I am pleased no stocks were downgraded in this year’s report,” said Louis Daniel, director of the state Division of Marine Fisheries. “I am hopeful that this trend will continue as more stocks recover and become viable.”

The division annually grades the status of 39 species of marine finfish, shellfish, shrimp and crabs as either viable, recovering, concern, depleted or unknown. The grades serve as a barometer of the overall health of the state’s fishery resources, and they are used to prioritize development of fishery management plans.

A stock is considered viable when it exhibits stable or increasing trends in a number of biological factors associated with healthy populations, such as a normal distribution of sizes, ages and spawning-age females or when it has met biological targets for sustainable harvest.

A recovering stock shows marked and consistent improvement in the criteria listed for a viable stock, but has not yet reached its target.

Stocks designated as concern are those that do not have an approved stock assessment or fishery management plan, but have seen increased fishing pressure, a decline in landings, lack a normal age distribution or are negatively impacted by environmental factors that cannot be controlled.

A depleted stock is a population in which there are too few spawning females to support an active fishery. Factors that can contribute to this status include overfishing, poor water quality, habitat loss, larvae survival and disease. This status determination is based on an approved stock assessment or fishery management plan.

A stock is classified as unknown when there is not sufficient data to determine trends in fishing pressure, landings or biological factors. Stocks designated as unknown are often prioritized for research programs.