

ATLANTIC CROAKER

(06/08 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - *Viable* - The Atlantic croaker population in the mid-Atlantic region is currently not overfished and overfishing is not taking place. Virtually all available data, including commercial landings and the juvenile abundance index demonstrates the stock to be viable. This is a recruitment driven stock where abundance fluctuates in response to large year classes, and over the last few years this abundance has been at all time highs for croaker in the mid-Atlantic region.

Average Commercial Landings and Value - 1998-2007 – 10,940,395 lbs./\$3,201,902

2007 Commercial Landings and Value - 7,301,295 lbs./\$2,726,029

Average Recreational Landings - 1998-2007 – 213,879 lbs., **2007** – 85,731 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations - 1998-2007 - 5, **2007** - 2

Average Recreational Commercial Gear License (RCGL) Landings - 2002-2007 - 14,709 lbs., **2007** – 8,899 lbs.

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) - In North Carolina, Atlantic croaker is currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)/South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC) FMP compliance requirements. An ASMFC FMP was initially approved in 1987, with the most recent review approved in November 2005. The ASMFC approved Amendment 1 to the FMP in November 2005. Amendment 1 recommends the establishment of biological reference points to allow for resource management on a coast wide basis, the restoration and maintenance of essential habitat, and the development of research needs to improve future stock assessments.

Research and Data Needs - continued collection of information on the biology and population dynamics including growth, age structure, reproductive biology, migration, mortality, and stock structure

Current Regulations - none

Harvest season - year round

Size and Age at Maturity – males: 5-9 inches total length (TL)/ 2 –3 years; females: 7 -9 inches TL/2 -3 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 15 years/13 years

Juvenile Abundance Index - 1998-2007 – 320.8, **2007** – 236.21

Habits and Habitats – Atlantic croaker inhabit mud and sand-bottom areas and feed chiefly on crustaceans, worms, mollusks, detritus, and small fishes. Atlantic croakers have a protracted spawning season with a peak during October in North Carolina. The pelagic eggs and recently hatched larvae drift toward land. Later, the advanced larval stages and juveniles continue their migration inshore by actively swimming into estuarine nursery areas. Maximum recruitment of juvenile fish is usually in the spring, with movement to offshore waters in the fall.

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