

## **SOUTHERN FLOUNDER**

(06/98 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status**--Viable. Catches and catch per unit effort have remained stable or increased in recent years. Pressure on southern flounder from the estuarine gill net and pound net fisheries is tremendous. Tagging studies indicate that after fish leave the estuarine waters they experience little to no pressure in near shore ocean waters. The age distribution is comprised of mainly 1 and 2 year old fish, which is a major point of concern.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 1987-1997**-- 3,285,184 lb, \$5,617,474

**1997 Commercial Landings and Value** -- 4,081,472 lb, \$7,989,914

**Average Recreational Landings 1987-1997 and 1997**-- 106,507 lb, 211,432 lb

**Average Number of Citations 1987-1997**-- 124, 1997 Citations----- 301

**Status of Fisheries Management Plan**-- No plan. Summer flounder FMP has a limited effect on this species.

**Research and Data Needs**-- stock assessment (underway), continued monitoring of commercial fisheries, expanded coverage of estuarine gill net fishery, bycatch mortality estimates, reproductive ecology (underway).

**Current minimum size limit**-- 13 inches internal, 15 inches ocean

**Harvest Season**-- no closure.

**Size at maturity, age at maturity**-- 13 inches, 1 year old

**Historical maximum age, current maximum age**-- 8 years old, 5 years old

**Average juvenile index 1987-1997**-- 1.2, 1997 value 2.1

**Habits/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, adult southern flounder return to North Carolina's estuaries after spawning.

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