

Stock Status Report 2015

Species and Stock	Status					Comments
	Viable	Recovering	Concern	Depleted	Unknown	
Bass, Black Sea						
North of Hatteras						The stock was declared rebuilt in 2009 based on the 2008 stock assessment for U.S. waters north of Cape Hatteras. Due to unique life history characteristics (e.g., the species changes sex from female to male) and other data concerns, the 2011 and 2012 assessments were not accepted for determining stock status. Currently, the 2012 assessment is being used to manage the stock under a constant catch strategy. Although the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission considers the stock to be rebuilt, concerns remain due to uncertainty in recent stock assessments and low landings in North Carolina waters. A new stock assessment is scheduled for 2016.
South of Hatteras						The stock is recovered after going through a federally-managed rebuilding plan, which went into place in 2006. The 2013 stock assessment indicated the stock is not overfished and has met the rebuilding plan's target.
Bass, Striped						
Albemarle Sound and Roanoke River						The 2014 Albemarle/Roanoke striped bass benchmark stock assessment (data through 2012) indicates the resource is not overfished or experiencing overfishing. However, estimates of fishing mortality and spawning stock biomass are close to the threshold reference points. Stock projections from the 2014 benchmark assessment indicated harvest at the quota approved in Amendment 1 (550,000 pounds) was unsustainable at recent levels of recruitment. Projections suggested a quota of 275,000 pounds would maintain fishing mortality and spawning stock biomass at the new reference points. Based on this information, the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission revised Amendment 1 to the N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan in November 2014, setting the harvest quota at 275,000 pounds, effective Jan. 1, 2015.
Atlantic Ocean Migratory Stock						In response to the results of the 2013 benchmark assessment indicating a steady decline in the spawning stock biomass, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Striped Bass Management Board approved Addendum IV in October 2014. The Addendum establishes new fishing mortality reference points. In order to reduce fishing mortality to a level at or below the new target, the coastal states are required to implement a 25 percent harvest reduction from 2013 levels, while Chesapeake Bay states/jurisdictions are required to implement a 20.5 percent harvest reduction from 2012 levels.
Central/Southern						The lack of adequate data causes the Central Southern Management Area stocks to be quantitatively assessed as unknown and to be listed as "concern." The need for continued conservation management efforts are supported by the truncated size and age distributions, low overall abundance, and the absence of older fish in the spawning ground surveys. Amendment I to the N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan was approved by the Marine Fisheries Commission in February 2013.

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Bluefish						The Atlantic stock of bluefish is not overfished and is not experiencing overfishing. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Bluefish Technical Committee continues to work on improving and refining bluefish age data and the bluefish stock assessment. A new benchmark stock assessment is scheduled for completion at the beginning of July 2015.
Croaker, Atlantic						Atlantic croaker is not experiencing overfishing. Estimates of spawning stock biomass were too uncertain to precisely determine overfished stock status. However, given that biomass has been increasing and the age structure of the population has been expanding since the late 1980s, it is unlikely the stock is in trouble.
Dolphin						The status of dolphin is viable based on trends in landings data. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan is currently managed under Amendment 5 (2014), which revises annual catch limits, sector allocations, accountability measures and annual catch targets implemented through the Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit Amendment.
Drum, Black						The 2015 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Black Drum Stock Assessment determined that the stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. Based on the results of the stock assessment, the median biomass was estimated to be well above the median biomass that produces maximum sustainable yield, thus no additional management measures are needed beyond those established in the 2013 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission fishery management plan.
Drum, Red						Overfishing is not occurring. A stock assessment completed in 2009 by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission indicates that the population is above the overfishing threshold and likely above or very near the management target. A new stock assessment will be completed in 2015.
Eel, American						The stock was declared depleted by the 2012 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission benchmark stock assessment. Stock status is poorly understood due to non-standard sampling protocols across the species' range. Reliable indexes of abundance of this species are scarce. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Addendum IV to the American Eel Interjurisdictional Fishery Management Plan to address issues with the glass eel fishery and glass eel aquaculture and establish a coast-wide cap for yellow eels. In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to add American Eel to the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife. The Service began an extensive status review for the American Eel to assess the health of the population and the magnitude of threats facing the species. A decision on the proposed rule is expected by Sept. 30, 2015.

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Flounder, Southern						The 2014 stock assessment of southern flounder in North Carolina waters could not be used to determine stock status because the North Carolina stock of southern flounder mixes with stocks in the U.S. South Atlantic. There are concerns about the sustainability of current harvest because of a coastwide decline in juvenile and adult abundance. Supplement A to Amendment 1 is in development to address these concerns. A regional stock assessment should be considered to determine stock status.
Flounder, Summer						The 2013 National Marine Fisheries Service's Northeast Fisheries Science Center stock assessment for U.S. waters north of Cape Hatteras indicated the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring. The stock was rebuilt in 2010 and is considered to be viable. A comprehensive amendment is underway and scheduled to be completed in 2017.
Grouper, Gag						According to the last regional (North Carolina to Florida) stock assessment (April 2014) from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the gag stock was experiencing overfishing, but was not overfished. However, the National Marine Fisheries Service removed the stock from the overfishing list in December 2014. This decision was because in 2012 (the terminal year of the assessment) the fishing mortality rate was below the threshold, and the projected fishing mortality rate in 2013 was also below the threshold. In addition, there was a steady and consistent decline in the fishing mortality rate for the last 5-6 years of the assessment. A federal management plan is in place restricting harvest to prevent overfishing from occurring.
Herring, River (A)						
Albemarle Sound						Amendment 2 to the N.C. River Herring Fishery Management Plan was approved and became effective in 2015. The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission implemented a no harvest provision for commercial and recreational fisheries in joint and coastal waters of the state beginning with the 2007 season.
Other Areas						No current sampling program.
Kingfishes (A)						Trends in relative fishing mortality and fishery independent data are used to track the stock condition because a regional stock assessment is not currently available. Commercial landings and recreational landings were above their 10-year average. In 2014 all management triggers were at acceptable levels for sustainability.
Mackerel, King						Based on the 2014 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council stock assessment, the South Atlantic king mackerel stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The 2014 stock assessment is an improvement from the 2008 stock assessment where overfishing could not be determined.

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Mackerel, Spanish						Based on the 2012 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council stock assessment, the Spanish mackerel stock in the South Atlantic is not overfished and is not undergoing overfishing.
Menhaden, Atlantic						Commercial landings increased in 2014; however the landings still remain below the ten-year average due to changes in management. The 2015 benchmark stock assessment indicates that Atlantic menhaden are neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing. Atlantic menhaden are currently managed under the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Amendment 2, approved in 2012.
Mullet, Striped						The stock is not experiencing overfishing. Overfished status could not be determined due to a poor stock-recruitment relationship resulting in unreliable biomass based reference points. Landings for 2014 were within management threshold limits established in the 2006 fishery management plan. Historically, the commercial fishery has had sustained landings similar to current levels. Amendment 1 will be completed in 2015.
Seatrout, Spotted						The 2014 N.C. Spotted Seatrout Stock Assessment indicated that the North Carolina and Virginia stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. However, there is uncertainty about the current stock status because two cold stun events occurred during the assessment process, and were not included in the analysis.
Scup						The 2012 stock assessment update completed by the National Marine Fisheries Service's Northeast Fisheries Science Center for U.S. waters north of Cape Hatteras indicated the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring. A new stock assessment is underway in 2015.
Shad, American						Commercial landings decreased in 2014 and were below the ten-year average due to changes in management. The 2007 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission coastwide stock assessment concluded that the Albemarle Sound area stocks were stable, but well below historical levels, and the stock status of the other systems in North Carolina were unknown. In 2013, North Carolina adopted an American Shad Sustainable Fishery Plan to meet Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission requirements.
Shad, Hickory						Commercial landings increased in 2014 and value continued to be above the 10-year average. Two amendments to the Shad and River Herring Fishery Management Plan recently approved by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission do not directly address hickory shad. The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries has not conducted any directed sampling since 1993.
Sharks						In North Carolina coastal fishing waters, sharks are included in the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Sharks, implemented in August 2008. This plan was implemented to compliment the National Marine Fisheries Service Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan that includes sharks in federal waters. Recent assessment results indicate great uncertainty about the various shark species. The current status is concern because of the overfished, overfishing occurring or unknown status of sandbar, dusky, blacknose, blacktip, porbeagle and bonnethead sharks.

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Sheepshead						The division provided catch and biological information through 2014 to the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission. Results prompted the Commission to implement new harvest restrictions on this species effective June 1, 2015. The recreational landings were below their 10-year average while the commercial landings were above their 10 year average for 2014.
Snapper-Grouper Complex (B) (Reef Fish)						Of the 59 species in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council unit, some stocks are sustainable but several stocks are considered overfished. The overfished stocks include snowy grouper, speckled hind, red porgy, red snapper, red grouper and Warsaw grouper.
Spiny Dogfish						Spiny dogfish are currently managed under a joint Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and New England Fishery Management Council fishery management plan in federal waters and under the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Spiny Dogfish Interstate Fishery Management Plan in state waters. The 2014 stock assessment update, conducted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, estimates spiny dogfish are not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. Female spawning stock biomass estimates from 2009 to 2013 exceeded the biomass reference point. The stock was declared rebuilt in 2008.
Spot						Recreational landings increased significantly and commercial landings decreased slightly in 2014 from 2013. The juvenile abundance index decreased in 2014. In 2014, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved the traffic light approach to assess stock trends and initiate management for spot. A benchmark stock assessment is scheduled for 2016.
Sturgeon, Atlantic						The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is responsible for managing this species and considers the stocks to be depleted along the Atlantic Coast. There is a coastwide prohibition on possession. On April 5, 2012, the National Marine Fisheries Commission listed the Carolina Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic sturgeon as a federally endangered species. A new stock assessment is underway with plans to have peer reviews completed during 2017.
Weakfish (Gray Trout)						The weakfish stock along the Atlantic coast is at a level of low abundance. Coast- wide landings are near the lowest levels on record. The most recent assessment indicates that the cause is likely due to factors other than fishing mortality. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has set strict harvest limits in response to the decline in an effort to aid in stock recovery. A new stock assessment is currently underway with plans to have peer reviews completed during 2016.

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Shellfish and Crustaceans						
Clam, Hard						Data limitations prevent conducting a hard clam stock assessment and calculating sustainable harvest. Based on the best available indicators, commercial hand and mechanical harvest levels in most areas showed an increasing or constant trend, except in Pamlico Sound. Amendment 1 of the fishery management plan was completed in 2008. Amendment 2 of the fishery management plan is under development.
Crab, Blue						The stock status is “concern” due to continued decreases in landings. While 2014 landings were more than 4 million pounds higher than 2013 landings, there were significant decreases in recruitment and adult abundances. Landings were lower than the 10-year average of 27 million pounds; however, value for blue crab – hard, soft and peelers – increased.
Oyster, Eastern						There are insufficient data to conduct a traditional stock assessment or estimate sustainable harvest for the Eastern oyster in North Carolina. Commercial oyster landings have been in decline for most of the past century, and are vulnerable to overharvest because of other factors such as habitat disturbance, pollution and biological and environmental stressors. Amendment 4 of the fishery management plan is under development.
Scallop, Bay						High natural mortality from environmental change and predation cause annual variability in abundance. Sampling showed low abundance in all areas 2014. The main harvest season (late January to March) was not opened in 2015 in any region due to abundance levels not meeting the threshold in Amendment 2 of the N.C. Bay Scallop Fishery Management Plan to allow harvest.
Shrimp(C)						Annual shrimp stock status is determined by environmental and recruitment conditions. Natural mortality far outweighs fishing mortality. The division is continuing to collaborate with industry on bycatch reduction in the shrimp trawl fishery.
TOTALS:	15	2	12	4	4	



(A) Kingfishes (Sea Mullet) includes 3 species, and there are two species of river herring.

(B) The Snapper-Grouper Complex includes about 60 species, while there are more than 40 species of sharks. Within these groups, individual species range from Viable to Overfished. The status indicated is for the group as a whole.

(C) Shrimp consists of 3 species — brown, pink, and white.