

SOUTHERN FLOUNDER

(06/05 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - *Overfished* - Based on the 2004 stock assessment, the southern flounder stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1995-2004 – 3,374,870 lbs./\$5,911,311

2004 Commercial Landings and Value – 2,453,381 lbs./\$3,878,115

Average Recreational Angler Landings 1995-2004– 196,879 lbs., **2004** – 431,425 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations 1995-2004* – 359, **2004*** –622

Average RCGL Landings 2002-2004* – 91,469 lbs., **2004*** – 87,484 lbs.

Status of Fisheries Management Plan - A Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for southern flounder was developed by the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries in February 2005. The federal FMP for summer flounder also affects the recreational harvest of this species.

Research and Data Needs – Fisheries-independent adult abundance index, at-sea observer coverage of the estuarine gill net fishery, bycatch mortality estimates from all fisheries, verification of escapement of older flounder from the fishery, participation and harvest estimates for the recreational gig fishery, at-sea observer coverage of the estuarine gill net fishery, reproductive ecology and fisheries-independent adult abundance index.

Current Regulations (2005) – Commercial: 14-inch minimum size limit in internal and ocean waters, closed season from December 1-31 unless the individual has a License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean; no trip limits in internal waters and a 100 lb. trip limit in ocean waters unless the individual has a License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean. Gear restrictions to minimize undersized southern flounder bycatch to be implemented in the fall of 2005. Recreational: 14-inch minimum size limit/8 fish creel limit for ocean and internal waters with no closed season.

Harvest Season (2005) —Year round with peak catches from September - November

Size and Age at Maturity – 13 inches/1 year

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 10 years/6 years

Juvenile Abundance Indices Average 1995-2004** – 3.1, **2004**** – 1.5

Habits and 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, most adult southern flounder return to North Carolina's estuaries after spawning.

*Includes southern, summer and gulf flounders, but the majority are southern flounder.

**Arithmetic mean from Pamlico Sound Survey

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