

## **SPOTTED SEATROUT**

(06/04 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status—*Viable*** - Spotted seatrout are one of the few species that depend on estuaries throughout their life cycle, resulting in concerns about environmental impacts on the stock. Variability in annual reported catch is typical for this species, and seems to parallel the climatic conditions of the preceding winter and spring, i.e., low catches following severe winters, with winter cold shock of juveniles and adults cited as a primary factor in local and coastwide declines in spotted seatrout. It should be noted that catastrophic mortalities of spotted seatrout have also been attributed to hurricanes, excessive fresh water, red tide, and supersaturated dissolved oxygen conditions.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 1994-2003** –313,934 lbs., \$377,252

**2003 Commercial Landings and Value**--181,462 lbs., \$243,394

**Average Recreational Landings 1994-2003** - 379,406 lbs. **2003** - 142,858 lbs.

**Average Number of Award Citations 1994-2003**-- 371 **2003** – 328

**Average RCGL Landings 2002-2003**—16,456 lbs. **2003**-11,036 lbs.

**Status of Fisheries Management Plan**-- The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Spotted Seatrout was initially approved in 1984, and is reviewed periodically (every 3 yrs). Updates to the Plan incorporate new data and research findings, and assess the status of stocks and the fisheries. The ASMFC FMP applies to all states from Florida through Maryland, and all are in compliance. Amendment 1, approved by the ASMFC Policy Board on November 1991, added the objective of maintaining a spawning potential ratio (SPR) of at least 20% to minimize the possibility of recruitment failure.

**Data/Research Needs**-- validated index of juvenile abundance, fishery independent data, commercial and recreational mortality estimates, stock assessment.

**Current Regulations**-- 12" TL minimum size. Ten fish bag limit per person per day taken by hook and line.

**Harvest Season**-- Open year round.

**Size and Age at Maturity**-- 7-9 inches FL at <1 year  
(Males mature at a younger age, smaller size, and earlier in the season than females).

**Historical and Current Maximum Age**-- 12, 9

**Juvenile Abundance Indices**-- unknown

**Habits/Habitats**-- Estuarine dependent member of the Sciaenidae family that includes kingfish, spot, croaker, red drum, black drum, and weakfish. Peak catches occur in the fall, although May and June are also productive months. North Carolina spotted seatrout have a protracted spawning season which extends from late April through early October. Juveniles are dependent on estuarine seagrass habitat as critical nursery areas.

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