

BLACK SEA BASS

(06/03 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status—*Overfished; South of Hatteras.* Based on recent South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) stock assessment., the spawning stock biomass is 22% and the southern stock is heavily exploited with a decline over time.

—*Viable; North of Hatteras.* Based on the Northeast Fishery Science Center (NEFSC) spring survey, black sea bass north of Cape Hatteras are no longer over fished.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1994-2002— 654,280 lb (74% are caught south of Hatteras), \$952,878

2002 Commercial Landings and Value— 590,733 lb, \$876,465

Average Recreational Landings 1993-2002 — 144,658 lb **2002** — 123,363 lb

Average Number of Award Citations (4 lbs.) 1993-2002/2002 only—90/210.

Status of Fisheries Management Plans— The stock north of Cape Hatteras is currently managed under the joint Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission/Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council (ASMFC/MAFMC) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Black Sea Bass. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls, escape vents for pots, and minimum fish size limits. South of Cape Hatteras the species is managed by the SAFMC under Amendment 9 to the Snapper-Grouper FMP by minimum fish sizes and bag limits.

Research and Data Needs— continue monitoring of catches for age and length data.

Current minimum size limit—11.5 inches (TL) north of Cape Hatteras, 10 inches (TL) and a 20 fish bag limit south of Cape Hatteras.

Harvest Season— North of Cape Hatteras the commercial season closes after quota is met.

Size at maturity, age at maturity— 7.7 inches TL, 2 years old

Historical maximum age, current maximum age—20 years old, 8 years old

Juvenile Abundance Index — not available

Habits/Habitats—Black sea bass reverse sex from female to male between the ages of 2 and 4. Black sea bass north and south of Cape Hatteras are recognized as different stocks. Black sea bass inhabit irregular hard-bottom areas such as wrecks, artificial reefs, reefs, and rock outcroppings. Sea bass south of Cape Hatteras are found inshore of snappers, groupers, grunts and porgies. Sea bass north of Cape Hatteras move inshore and north in the summer and offshore and south in the summer.

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