

BLUEFISH

(06/06 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock status – Recovering – Bluefish is not experiencing overfishing, but remains in an overfished state. Fishing mortality has steadily declined since 1991, with biomass estimates increasing since 1997.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1996-2005 - 3,279,595 lbs./\$904,450

2005 Commercial Landings and Value – 2,815,588 lbs./\$787,045 (quota managed)

Average Recreational Landings 1996-2005 – 899,944 lbs., **2005** - 1,115,076 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (17 lbs.) 1996-2005 – 20, **2005** – 5

Average Recreational Commercial Gear Landings 2002-2005 –18,002 lbs., **2005** – 13,431 lbs.

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) - In North Carolina, bluefish is currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission/Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council FMP compliance requirements. Amendment 1 to the plan, established a schedule to rebuild the stock to a biomass level to support harvests at or near the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) by 2007, by eliminating overfishing through a gradual reduction in the fishing mortality rate (F). Fishing mortality rates have decreased from F=0.51 (1999-2000) to F=0.31 (2004-2007). The FMP allows annually adjusted, state-by-state commercial quota system and recreational harvest limits to reduce fishing mortality. Amendment 1 also outlines a series of permitting and reporting requirements. The most recent stock status information (Bluefish Technical Committee 2005) indicates bluefish are overfished, but overfishing is not occurring. While the 2005 bluefish assessment was reviewed and approved by the Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Review Committee, concerns regarding the adequacy of the data led the Commission and the Council to reduce the overall Total Allowable Landings (TAL) from 30.8 (2005) to 24.8 million lbs. (2006). The overall TAL was then allocated to the recreational (83%) and commercial (17%) fisheries. As such, the commercial quota was set at 4.2 million pounds and the recreational harvest limit at 20.5 million pounds. Based on the unlikelihood that the recreational sector would land their 83%, 6,285,772 lbs. of the recreational harvest limit for 2006 will be transferred from the recreational harvest to the commercial quota. As a result of the transfer, the recreational harvest limit for 2006 will be 14.3 million lbs. and the commercial quota will be 10.5 million lbs. commercial TAL. North Carolina's commercial quota (32%) increased slightly to 3,366,384 lbs. for 2006.

Data/Research Needs - Validated age data, fishery independent data, commercial bycatch and recreational mortality estimates, exploration of alternative assessment models.

Current Regulations (2006) – 15-fish per person per day taken by hook and line. Only 5 fish of the 15-fish limit can be greater than 24 inches Total Length.

Harvest Season - Open year round

Size and Age at Maturity - 13 inches Fork Length/2 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 14 years/12 years

Juvenile Abundance Index - Unknown

Habits/Habitats - Bluefish are pelagic and important to saltwater fishermen throughout the world. Bluefish school by size and make seasonal migrations north in the spring and south in winter. Large fish tend to

congregate in the northern part of the range. There are two spawning groups, one that spawns at sea during the spring and the other spawns at sea in the summer.

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