

SUMMER FLOUNDER

(06/03 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status — *Viable*. As of 2003, the summer flounder stock is no longer overfished and overfishing is no longer occurring. However, recreational and commercial harvest limits will remain in place to insure that the species does not become over-exploited again in the future.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1993-2002 — 3,313,520 lb, \$5,444,288

2002 — 4,104,741 lb (quota managed), \$6,069,701

Average Recreational Landings 1993-2002 — 374,086 lb., **2002** — 215,868 lb

Status of Fisheries Management Plan — Currently managed under Amendment 12 to the joint ASMFC/MAFMC Fishery Management Plan for Summer Flounder. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls, minimum fish size limits, recreational bag limits, and a moratorium on new entrants into the fishery.

Research and Data Needs — Bycatch mortality estimates, age comparisons of northern and southern fish using scales and otoliths

Current Minimum Size Limit — *Internal Waters* – Commercial: 13" TL, Recreational: 13" TL Neuse, Pamlico, and Pungo rivers, along with Pamlico County bays and mainland Hyde County bays west of Bluff Pt., 14" TL in all other internal areas
Ocean Waters – Commercial: 13" TL, Recreational: 15½" TL

Harvest Season — Commercial season opened January 1, 2003 and closed March 21, 2003. The commercial season will not re-open until November 1, 2003. There is no closed season for the recreational fishery.

Size at maturity, age at maturity — 10.9 inches, 1.5 years old

Historical maximum age, current maximum age — 15 years old, 10 years old

Average juvenile index 1993-2002 — 11.2, **2002** — 22.0 (number of individuals per unit of effort)

Habits/Habitats — Summer flounder are estuarine dependent members of the left-eyed flounder family that also include southern flounder and gulf flounder. Summer flounder migrate offshore and north during winter and early spring and inshore and south during summer and fall. Summer flounder spawn from November through March when water temperatures are between 53 and 67 degrees. Larval summer flounder enter inlets and settle on sandy bottoms in higher-salinity areas of estuaries. After or towards the end of their first year, summer flounder move into ocean waters to spawn and join coastal migratory groups.

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