GAG
(06/09 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status – *Concern* - Also called black grouper or gray grouper. According to the latest stock assessment (2006) from South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC), the gag stock is experiencing overfishing, but it is not overfished. Estimates of recruitment in 2002-2004 are below average and fishing mortality rates in 2002-2004 are above the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) level. Stock projections suggest that the stock will remain above the proposed Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) in the medium-term. In 1995, only 5.5% of the fish captured were male, versus 19.6% from 1976-1982.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1999-2008 – 205,385 lbs /$569,873

2008

Commercial Landings and Value – 179,598 lbs /$615,991

Average Recreational Landings 1999-2008 – 121,157 lbs, **2008** – 147,157 lbs

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) - In N.C. , gag is currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to SAFMC Snapper Grouper FMP compliance requirements, which was initially approved in 1983. Amendment 4, effective in 1992, established a 20-inch total length (TL) minimum size; Amendment 9, effective 1999, increased the minimum size to 24 inches TL, created a 2-fish recreational bag and a March-April closure (bag limit only, no sale). Proposed Amendment 16 will expand the spawning closure from January-April and include a recreational closure, reduce the bag limit to one gag in the grouper recreational bag limit aggregate, establish a commercial quota of 352,940 lbs gutted weight and exclude captains and crew on for-hire vessels from the recreational bag limit for groupers.

Data and Research Needs - develop juvenile index, assess release mortality values, conduct population assessment, expand age and growth studies, and determine migration patterns

Current Regulations - state and federal: 24 inches TL

Harvest Season – commercial- no sale March and April. recreational- year round

Size and Age at Maturity – Gag first mature as females at 5 years, possibly 4 years, when fish are greater than 26 inches TL. Transformation to the male generally occurs around 10 years and greater than 39 inches TL.

Historical and Current Maximum Age - 22 years/30 years

Juvenile Abundance Index - none available

Habits and Habitats - Large juveniles and adults occur on hard or “live” bottom on the outer continental shelf. Larval gag are estuarine dependent. Spawning occurs offshore and pelagic larvae are carried into estuaries where they reside in sea grass beds or oyster rocks. The juveniles emigrate in the fall to nearshore reefs.

For more information, see DMF Species Leads page.