

MONKFISH

(06/00 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status --*Overfished* -- The Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NESFC) fall bottom trawl index for monkfish has declined in the last 15 years. Mean size at capture has decreased throughout the species range. Recent fishing mortality has exceeded acceptable levels and the NEFSC considers monkfish overexploited and at low levels of abundance.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1990-1999 – 380,885 lb, \$291,391

1999 Commercial Landings and Value – 599,538 lb, \$654,846

Average Recreational Landings and Value 1990-1999 -- Unknown

Status of Fishery Management Plan -- Currently managed under the joint NEFMC and MAFMC Fishery Management Plan for monkfish. It establishes two management areas with annual quotas for each (northern and southern), limited entry along with different permit categories for the directed fishery, an annual limit of 40 days at sea fishing for monkfish, and still allows the traditional incidental catch to occur. Because the total allowable catch (TAC) was exceeded in the Southern Fishery Management Area (SFMA) in 1999, daily trip limits were established on May 1, 2000.

Data/Research Needs — Fishery dependent (commercial) sampling

Current Size Limits — 21 inches total length (TL) and 14 inches tail length in the SFMA for 2000 because 1999 TAC was exceeded.

Harvest Season --Open year round; the North Carolina commercial fishery occurs from January to April.

Size and Age at Maturity — Males at 14.5 inches TL and age 3; females at -19 inches TL and age 4

Historical and Current Maximum Age — Males at age 9 and females at age 11

Juvenile Abundance Index Average 1990-1999 -- Unknown **1999** -- Unknown

Habits/Habitats --Monkfish, also called goosefish or anglerfish, range from the Grand Banks and northern Gulf of St. Lawrence south to Cape Hatteras. Found from inshore out to depths greater than 800 m, monkfish are most common in depths ranging from 70 to 100 m. Migratory movement is driven by spawning and feeding. Spawning occurs offshore in early spring in North Carolina and lasts till late September in northern latitudes. Eggs are buoyant and float in huge gelatinous masses until hatching. Monkfish are bottom fish that have a modified first dorsal spine which is used to attract prey. The tip of the spine possesses a red fleshy flap of skin which can be wiggled to lure in prey which is then engulfed in the monkfish's huge mouth. Prey items are numerous, some of which include spiny dogfish, skates, weakfish, tautog, flounders and sea birds among others.

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