

EASTERN OYSTER
(06/03 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status—*Concern*—Long term decline probably caused by over harvesting, habitat disturbances, and pollution. Most recently stressed by Dermo (*Perkinsus marinus*) infections.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1993-2002--225,024 lbs. of meat, \$885,512

2002 Commercial Landings and Value--43,775 lbs. of meat, \$991,004

Average Recreational Landings 1993-2002 and 2002--Unknown

Status of Fisheries Management Plan-- A state fishery management plan (FMP) was adopted August 2001 by the Marine Fisheries Commission. Recommendations are currently being implemented.

Research and Data Needs--Habitat size and location; oyster density within habitat; fishing mortality and substrate disturbance caused by different harvest techniques; Catch-Per-Unit-Effort (CPUE) data; parasite: life history, means of transmission, and possible control methods; effects of pollutants; effects of bottom disturbing fishing gear; accurate landing data for commercial and recreational harvest from public and private bottom.

Current Minimum Size Limit--3 inch shell length

Harvest Season--Open season Oct. 15 through May 15, Director may impose any or all of the following restrictions:

Specify days of the week harvesting will be allowed.

Specify areas.

Specify means and methods, which may be employed in the taking.

Specify the time period.

Specify the quantity, but shall not exceed possession of more than 50 bushels.

Specify the minimum size limit by shell length, but not less than 2 ½ inches.

Size and Age at Maturity--Approximately 2" shell length, during their second growing season, but can be sexually mature 4 to 12 weeks after settlement.

Historical and Current Maximum Age-- 40 years old, unknown

Juvenile Abundance Indices Average 1993-2002 and 2002--N/A (Spatfall information on cultch planting sites available on request)

Habits/Habitats--Oysters are bivalve mollusks residing in intertidal or subtidal estuarine environments. A relatively clean firm substrate where water circulation provides sufficient food is necessary for oysters to attach, survive and grow to market size (3 inches). Optimal salinity and temperature ranges are 12 to 25 ppt. and 10 to 16 degrees C (50 to 79 degrees F) respectively. Spawning is triggered by increases in temperature (> 20 degrees C), and salinity (>10 ppt.) and occurs in N.C. from May through September.

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