

TAUTOG

(06/03 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status — *Overfished*. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has classified the coastwide tautog population as *overfished*. Spawning stock biomass is low and fishing mortality exceeds the management target from Massachusetts to Virginia. No estimates of stock size or mortality are available for tautog in North Carolina.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1993-2002 — 818 pounds, \$371.

2002 Commercial Landings and Value — 705 pounds, \$558.

Average Recreational Landings 1993-2002 — 13,985 pounds.

2002 Recreational Landings — 5,160 pounds.

Average Number of Award Citations 1993-2002 — 3.5 and **2002** — 1.

Status of Fishery Management Plan (FMP) — The ASMFC Interstate Tautog Fishery Management Plan (FMP) has been in effect since 1996. In North Carolina, tautog is currently included in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to ASMFC compliance regulations. Plan compliance requirements include 14 inch minimum-size regulations for both commercial and recreational fishing sectors, as well as other state-by-state management restrictions needed to achieve the target fishing mortality for the population. Further state-by-state compliance restrictions for 2003 are still needed to reduce fishing mortality on the coastwide stock.

Research and Data Needs — Improved fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data from the southern half of its range (DE, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA). Age structure of the stock in both the commercial and recreational fisheries. Long-term monitoring surveys to provide size distributions and abundance throughout its range.

Current Minimum Size Limit — No restrictions.

Harvest Season — No restrictions.

Size and Age at Maturity — 11 inches, 3 years old.

Historical and Current Maximum Age — 30 + years.

Juvenile Abundance Indices — None Available.

Habits/Habitats — Tautog are slow growing, long-lived reef fish found from Nova Scotia to Georgia. Adults utilize submerged hard-structure as habitat, including offshore and inshore wrecks, artificial reefs, rocky reefs, breakwaters, and pier areas. Young-of-the-year tautog rely primarily on shallow, estuarine, macroalgal areas and eelgrass beds as nursery habitat. In its northern range, adult tautog migrate in the spring from offshore wintering locations to inshore habitats to spawn and feed, then return offshore in the fall as water temperatures drop. The extent of this migration may be less pronounced in the southern portion of its range. The spawning period extends from late April to early June. Slow growth to maturity and small, within-season home ranges render tautog highly vulnerable to overfishing.

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