

TAUTOG

(06/04 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.

10-Year Average Commercial Landings and Value (1994-2003) -- 793 lb, \$321

2003 Commercial Landings and Value -- 98 lb, \$49

Average Recreational Landings (1994-2003) -- 15,023 lb.

2003 Recreational Landings -- 20,115 lb.

Average Number of Award Citations (1994-2003) -- 3.4 and **2003** -- 3

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 Inter-jurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to ASMFC FMP compliance requirements. ASMFC requires 14 inch minimum size regulations for both commercial and recreational fishing sectors, as well as state-by-state management restrictions needed to achieve the target fishing mortality for the Atlantic population. The ASMFC currently grants *de minimis* status to North Carolina due its limited tautog harvest, which exempts the state from monitoring and harvest reductions outlined in the plan.

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 undergo a spring migration from offshore wintering locations to inshore habitats for feeding and spawning, 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](#)