

## **SCUP**

(06/07 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

**Stock Status - *Concern*** - Based on the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) Spring Spawning Biomass estimates; the index values for 2004 and 2005 were below the minimum stock size threshold, indicating that the stock was overfished. Together with the lack of recent stock assessment information, discards in the directed scup fishery continue to create uncertainty regarding the status of the scup stock. Efforts should continue to further reduce fishing mortality rates and minimize fishery discards. Amendment 14 has been proposed to rebuild the scup stock from an overfished condition to a level associated with maximum sustainable yield, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Scup is a relatively data poor stock and uncertainty exists around estimates of fishing mortality, stock size, and discards.

**Average Commercial Landings and Value 1997-2006** – 119,597 lbs./\$67,927

**2006 Commercial Landings and Value** – 140,062 lbs./\$96,932 (quota managed)

**Average Recreational Landings 1997-2006** – 1,755 lbs., **2006** – 7,745 lbs.

**Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)** - In North Carolina, scup are currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)/Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) FMP compliance requirements. The Scup FMP includes a seven-year plan for reducing fishing effort and restoring the stock. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls and minimum fish size limits. The most recent assessment on scup, completed in 2002, indicated scup were no longer overfished, but could not be evaluated with respect to overfishing. However, based on the NEFSC Spring Spawning Biomass estimates, the index values for 2004 and 2005 were below the minimum stock size threshold, and the stock was considered overfished in 2004 and 2005, but increased to equal the threshold in 2006 (2.77 kg/tow). The 2002 assessment (35th Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC)) also concluded although the “relative exploitation rates have declined in recent years, the absolute value of current fishing mortality (F) cannot be determined.” Therefore, no comparison with the F threshold specified in the FMP could be made, and the rebuilding schedule was disapproved. Discards in the directed scup fishery together with a lack of recent stock assessment information continue to create uncertainty regarding the status of the scup stock. The lack of a current assessment led both management authorities to take a precautionary approach in establishing the 2007 Total Allowable Landings (TAL) for scup. The TAL for 2007 was set at 16.0 million lbs., a slight reduction from the 2006 TAL (16.27 million lbs.), for a 2007 allocation of 12.48 million lbs. commercial (78 percent) and 3.52 million lbs. recreational (22 percent). The council also approved development of a framework to amend the FMP to allow for a rollover of the scup quota from the Winter I period (January-April) to Winter II period (November-December), and to allow the transfer of scup at sea. The board and council approved new mesh size requirements with the minimum mesh size for the scup fishery in 2005, at 5 inches, with a minimum length of 75 meshes from the terminus of the net. For small nets with less than 75 meshes codend, the entire net will be 5 inches. The threshold level used to trigger the new minimum mesh size is 200 lbs. from May 1 to October 31.

**Research and Data Needs** - Continue monitoring catches and increase sampling of strata that have substantial landings of scup. Reliable estimates of scup discards are essential. The uncertainty associated with discards prevents reliable estimates of discard at age in the commercial fishery, and seriously impedes development of a reliable analytic assessment, as well as forecasts of catch and biomass for the stock.

**Current Regulations (2007)** – Commercial: 9 inches; Recreational: 8 inches/50 per day

**Harvest Season** -2007 TAL: 16.0 million lbs; 12.48 commercial quota; 3.52 million lbs. recreational quota. Federal possession limit in Winter I is 30,000 lbs. per trip, with states implementing a two week landing limit

of 30,000 pounds. When 80% of the TAC is reached, the possession limit will drop to 1,000 pounds per day. Winter II landing limit is 1,500 lbs. per day. North Carolina commercial and recreational seasons close by proclamation.

**Size and Age at Maturity** – 50% maturity: 6.1 inches/2 years, both sexes.

**Historical and Current Maximum Age** - 20 years/10 years

**Juvenile Abundance Index** - not available

**Habits/Habitats** - Scup are a schooling continental shelf species found in depths from 40 fathoms to 100 fathoms, distributed primarily between Cape Cod, Mass. and Cape Hatteras, N.C., and are assumed to constitute a single unit stock. Scup migrate south and offshore in autumn as the water temperature decreases, arriving in offshore wintering areas by December, but generally not commercially landed in North Carolina until the coldest winter months (January-April). Spawning occurs from May through August and peaks in June. Scup have been characterized as slow-growing, relatively long-lived fish.

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