BLUEFISH
(06/05 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock status – *Recovering* – Bluefish is not experiencing overfishing, but remains in an overfished state, according to the most recent ASMFC stock assessment (2005). Fishing mortality has steadily declined since 1991, with biomass estimates increasing since 1997.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1995-2004- 3,299,100 lbs./$933,634

2004 Commercial Landings and Value - 3,762,944 lbs./$849,302

Average Recreational Landings 1995-2004 - 825,592 lbs., **2004 -** 1,030,756 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations 1995-2004 – 20, **2004 –** 9

Average RCGL Landings 2002-2004 -19,526 lbs., **2004 –** 13,573 lbs.

Status of Fisheries Management Plan - In North Carolina, bluefish is currently included in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to ASMFC/MAFMC FMP compliance requirements. Amendment 1 to the plan, established a schedule to rebuild the stock to a biomass level to support harvests at or near the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) by 2007, by eliminating overfishing through a gradual reduction in the fishing mortality rate (F). Fishing mortality rates have been decreased from F=0.51 in 1999-2000, to F=0.41 from 2001-2003, and finally to F=0.31 for 2004-2007. The FMP allows annually-adjusted, state-by-state commercial quota system and recreational harvest limits to reduce fishing mortality. Amendment 1 also outlines a series of permitting and reporting requirements. North Carolina's commercial quota (32 percent) increased slightly to 3,366,384 lbs. for 2005. The most recent stock status information (Bluefish Technical Committee 2005) indicates bluefish are overfished, but overfishing is not occurring. A peer reviewed stock assessment was conducted in 2005 by the ASMFC, and is pending review by the Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC).

Data/Research Needs - Validated age data, fishery independent data, commercial bycatch and recreational mortality estimates, exploration of alternative assessment models.

Current Regulations (2005)- Fifteen fish per person per day taken by hook and line. Only five fish of the 15 fish limit can be greater than 24 inch TL.

Harvest Season - Open year round

Size and Age at Maturity - 13 inches FL/2 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 14 years/12 years

Juvenile Abundance Index - Unknown.

Habits/Habitats - Bluefish are pelagic and important to saltwater fishermen throughout the world. Bluefish school by size and make seasonal migrations north in the spring and south in winter. Large fish tend to congregate in the northern part of the range. There are two spawning groups, one that spawns at sea during the spring and the other spawns at sea in the summer.

For more information, see DMF Species Leads page