

BLACK SEA BASS

(06/04 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status —

Viable; North of Hatteras- The most recent assessment, completed in June 1998, indicated that black sea bass are over-exploited and at a low biomass level (SAW 27). However, Amendment 12 established a biomass threshold based on the Northeast Fishery Science Center (NEFSC) spring survey. The spring index for 2002 was the highest value in the time series (1968-2002), and the 2003 index was above average. Because of these values, the stock north of Hatteras is no longer overfished.

Overfished; South of Hatteras- Based on recent South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) stock assessment, the spawning stock biomass is 22% and the southern stock is heavily exploited with a decline over time.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1994-2003-- 675,660 lbs. (68% were caught south of Hatteras in last 4 years), \$1,000,129

2003 Commercial Landings and Value-- 850,550 lbs., \$1,416,659

Average Recreational Landings 1994-2003 -- 146,320 lbs. **2003** -- 176,357 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations 1994-2003--101 **2003**--159

Status of Fisheries Management Plans-- The stock north of Cape Hatteras is currently managed under the joint Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission/Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council (ASMFC/MAFMC) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Black Sea Bass. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls, escape vents for pots, and minimum fish size limits. Amendment 13 to the FMP established the implementation of a state-specific allocation of the coastwide quota. The Council and Board recommended a coastwide TAL of 8.00 million lb for 2004. Based on landings data from 1983-1992, 49% of the TAL is allocated to the commercial fishery and 51% is allocated to the recreational fishery. Research set-aside is then subtracted from the TAL, and the quotas are further adjusted for overages. As such, NC's preliminary commercial quota (11%) for North of Cape Hatteras for 2004 is ~ 424,600 lbs. South of Cape Hatteras the species is managed by the SAFMC under Amendment 9 to the Snapper-Grouper FMP by minimum fish sizes and bag limits.

Data/Research Needs-- continue monitoring of catches.

Current Regulations--11 inches (TL) minimum size north of Cape Hatteras, 10 inches (TL) minimum size and a 20 fish bag limit south of Cape Hatteras.

Harvest Season-- North of Cape Hatteras, the commercial season closes after quota is met.

Size and age at maturity-- 7.7 inches TL, 2 years

Historical and Current maximum age--20, 8

Juvenile Abundance Index -- not available

Habits/Habitats--Black sea bass reverse sex from female to male between the ages of 2 and 4. Black sea bass north and south of Cape Hatteras are recognized as different stocks. Black sea bass inhabit irregular hard-bottom areas such as wrecks, artificial reefs, reefs, and rock outcroppings. Sea bass north of Cape Hatteras move inshore and north in the summer and offshore and south in the winter. Sea bass south of Cape Hatteras are found inshore of snappers, groupers, grunts and porgies.

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