



N.C. Department of

Resources

Environment and Natural

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N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries releases annual stock status report

MOREHEAD CITY – Five North Carolina coastal fish species were reclassified as viable by the 2015 Stock Status Report released today by the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries.

The report also reclassified the status of three other species and removed one species from the report. Reclassifications are based on updated information through 2014.

The division annually classifies the status of important marine finfish, shellfish, shrimp and crabs as viable, recovering, concern, depleted or unknown. The classifications serve as a barometer of the overall health of the state's fishery resources, and they are used to prioritize development of state fishery management plans.

Definitions for each stock status category can be found at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/stock-status-categories-and-definitions>.

Atlantic menhaden

Atlantic menhaden moved from concern to viable based on a Southeast Data, Assessment and Review 2015 benchmark stock assessment that indicates that Atlantic menhaden are neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing.

Overfished means the population size is too small. Overfishing means the annual catch rate is too high.

Black drum

Black drum moved from unknown to viable based on a 2015 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Black Drum Stock Assessment that determined that the stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing.

Kingfishes

Kingfishes moved from unknown to viable based on positive trends in biological data, as a regional stock assessment is not currently available.

King mackerel

King mackerel moved from concern to viable based on the 2014 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council stock assessment that indicates the South Atlantic king mackerel stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

Spotted seatrout

Spotted seatrout moved from depleted to viable based on a 2014 N.C. Spotted Seatrout Stock Assessment that indicates the North Carolina and Virginia stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

Black sea bass north of Hatteras

Black sea bass north of Hatteras moved from recovering to concern due to the lack of a recent approved stock assessment and recent low landings in North Carolina waters. The stock was declared rebuilt in 2009 based on the 2008 National Marine Fisheries Service's Northeast Fisheries Science Center stock assessment for U.S. waters north of Cape Hatteras. Due to unique life history characteristics and other data concerns, the 2011 and 2012 assessments were not accepted for determining stock status.

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Southern flounder

Southern flounder was moved from depleted to concern due to the lack of a recent approved stock assessment. A 2014 stock assessment of southern flounder in North Carolina waters could not be used to determine stock status because the southern flounder stock mixes throughout the South Atlantic (North Carolina to Florida). However, concerns exist about the sustainability of current harvest levels because of a coast-wide decline in juvenile and adult abundance.

Gag

Gag moved from concern to recovering based on a 2014 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council regional stock assessment that found the stock from North Carolina to Florida was experiencing overfishing, but was not overfished. The National Marine Fisheries Service removed the stock from the overfishing list in December 2014 after determining that harvest levels in 2012 and 2013 indicated overfishing was no longer occurring.

Monkfish

Monkfish was removed from the N.C. Stock Status Report due to the limited fishery in North Carolina. In 2014, commercial landings of monkfish were low and there were no reported recreational landings.

The complete 2015 Stock Status Report can be found on the division's website at: <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/stock-status-reports>.

For more information, contact division Fisheries Biologist Lee Paramore at 252-473-5734, ext. 222 or Lee.Paramore@ncdenr.gov

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