

MONKFISH

(06/99 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status --*Overfished* -- The Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NESFC) fall bottom trawl index for monkfish has declined sharply in the last 15 years. Mean size at capture has decreased throughout the species range. Recent fishing mortality has exceed acceptable levels and the NEFSC considers monkfish overexploited and at low levels of abundance.

Average Commercial Landings/Value 1989-1998 --330,270 lb, \$230,660

1998 Commercial Landings and Value -- 667,826 lb, \$463,330

Average Recreational Landings 1989-1998 -- Unknown **1998** -- Unknown

Status of Fishery Management Plan- Currently there is no state or federal plan for monkfish. A federal plan is being developed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Data/Research Needs--Commercial fishery sampling.

Current Size Limits-- No Size Restrictions.

Harvest Season--Open year round.

Size and Age at Maturity--14 -19 inches TL at 3-4 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age--12

Juvenile Abundance Index Average 1991-1998 and 1998 -- Unknown

Habits/Habitats--Monkfish, also called goosefish or anglerfish, range from the Grand Banks and northern Gulf of St. Lawrence south to Cape Hatteras. Found from inshore out to depths greater than 800 m, monkfish are most common in depths ranging from 70 to 100 m. Migratory movement is driven by spawning and feeding. Spawning occurs offshore in early spring in North Carolina and lasts till late September in northern latitudes. Eggs are buoyant and float in huge gelatinous masses until hatching. Monkfish are bottom fish that have a modified first dorsal spine which is used to attract prey. The tip of the spine possesses a red fleshy flap of skin which can be wiggled to lure in prey which is then engulfed in the monkfish's huge mouth. Prey items are numerous, some of which include spiny dogfish, skates, weakfish, tautog, flounders and sea birds among others.

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