

TAUTOG

(06/06 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - *Overfished* - The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has concluded that overfishing is occurring. However, since the plan does not define a specific biomass target, it cannot be determined if the population is overfished. With the exception of 1998, fishing mortality exceeds the management target (0.29) each year from 1986-2004 (Massachusetts-Virginia). No estimates of stock size or mortality are available for tautog in North Carolina.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1996-2005 - 601 lbs./\$270

2005 Commercial Landings and Value - 56 lbs./\$31

Average Recreational Landings 1996-2005 – 20,720 lbs., **2005** – 20,886 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (8 lbs.) 1996-2005 – 3, **2005** – 0

Status of Fishery Management Plan (FMP) - In North Carolina, tautog is currently included in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Plan, which defers to ASMFC FMP compliance requirements. The ASMFC Interstate Tautog FMP has been in effect since 1996. ASMFC requires 14-inch minimum size regulations for both commercial and recreational fishing sectors, as well as state-by-state management restrictions needed to achieve the target fishing mortality for the Atlantic population. The ASMFC currently grants *de minimis* status to North Carolina due its limited tautog harvest, which exempts the state from monitoring and harvest reductions outlined in the plan. The recreational fishery accounts for approximately 90% of the total coastwide harvest. The 2006 peer-reviewed stock assessment indicates the tautog resource continues to be at low biomass levels, but total stock biomass has been stable since 1999. Since the plan does not define a specific biomass target, it cannot be determined if the population is overfished. With the exception of 1998, fishing mortality exceeds the management target (0.29) each year from 1986-2004 (Massachusetts-Virginia).

Research and Data Needs - Improved fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data from the southern half of its range (DE, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA). Age structure of the stock in both the commercial and recreational fisheries. Long-term monitoring surveys to provide size distributions and abundance throughout its range.

Current Regulations (2006) - None

Harvest Season - No restrictions

Size and Age at Maturity - 11 inches/3 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age - 30 + years

Juvenile Abundance Index - None Available

Habits/Habitats - Tautog are slow growing, long-lived reef fish found from Nova Scotia to Georgia. Adults use submerged hard-structure as habitat, including offshore and inshore wrecks, artificial reefs, rocky reefs, breakwaters, and pier areas. Young-of-the-year tautog rely primarily on shallow, estuarine areas and eelgrass beds as nursery habitat. In its northern range, adult tautog undergo a spring migration from offshore wintering locations to inshore habitats for feeding and spawning, then return offshore in the fall as water temperatures drop, but the extent of this migration may be less pronounced in the southern portions of its range. The spawning period extends from late April to early June. Tautog are highly vulnerable to overfishing because of their slow growth to maturity and small, within-season home ranges.

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