

SUMMER FLOUNDER

Stock Status - Recovering - The 2009 Northeast Fisheries Science Center Stock Assessment indicates the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring based on the current biological reference points. However, the target spawning stock biomass (SSB) has yet to be achieved. Fishing mortality has steadily decreased since the early 1990s. Spawning stock biomass has generally increased since the early 1990s.

Average Commercial Landings and Value - 2000-2009 – 3,469,871 lbs./\$5,740,632

2009 Commercial Landings and Value – 2,859,039 lbs./\$5,513,799 (quota-managed)

Average Recreational Landings - 2000-2009 – 230,199 lbs., **2009** – 86,314 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (5 lbs.) - 2000-2009* – 409, **2009*** – 417

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) – In North Carolina, summer flounder is currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)/Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) FMP compliance requirements and are currently managed under Amendment 12 to the joint ASMFC/MAFMC FMP for summer flounder. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls, minimum fish size limits, recreational bag limits, and a moratorium on new entrants into the commercial fishery. The N.C. Southern Flounder FMP also affects the harvest of this species.

Research and Data Needs – Discard mortality estimates, age comparisons of northern and southern fish using scales and otoliths, continued expansion of observer coverage in the flounder trawl and scallop dredge fisheries, and species composition of recreationally released flounder.

Current Regulations – Commercial: 14-inches total length (TL) minimum size limit in internal and ocean waters; closed season in Atlantic Ocean through November 1, once 80 percent of quota is harvested; bycatch trip limit of 100 lbs. during closed season. A License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean is required to land more than 100 lbs. per trip. Recreational: 15-inches TL minimum size limit/8 fish creel limit for eastern estuarine waters and ocean waters north of Brown's Inlet with no closed season; 14-inch minimum size limit/8 fish limit in western estuarine waters and ocean and estuarine waters south of Brown's Inlet with no closed season.

Harvest Season — Commercial: January until 80 percent of the quota is harvested and November to December. Recreational: Year-round with peak catches from June through August.

Size and Age at Maturity – Females: 11 inches TL/1.5 years; Males: 10 inches TL/1 year

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 15 years/11 years

Juvenile Abundance Index - 2000-2009[^] – 9.2, **2009[^]** – 4.5 (not validated)

Habits and Habitats – Summer flounder are estuarine dependent members of the left-eyed flounder family that also include southern flounder and Gulf flounder. Summer flounder migrate offshore and south during fall and winter, and inshore and north during early spring and summer. Summer flounder spawn from November through March when water temperatures are between 53 degrees and 67 degrees. Larval summer flounder enter inlets and settle on sandy bottoms in higher-salinity areas of estuaries. After or towards the end of their first year, summer

flounder move into ocean waters to spawn and join the coastal migratory groups.

*Includes southern, summer and gulf flounders, but the majority are southern flounder.

^ Arithmetic mean from Pamlico Sound Survey (June only)

For more information, contact Chris Batsavage by email at chris.batsavage@ncdenr.gov (800-682-2632 or 252-808-8088).