

DOLPHIN

Stock Status - *Viable* – The status of dolphin is based on trends in landings data. Although dolphin are fast growing and mature early, there is concern about the potential for new fisheries (primarily longlines) to compromise historical allocations in the fishery. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) addresses these concerns.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 2000-2009 – 253,713 lbs./\$444,586

2009 Commercial Landings and Value – 610,932 lbs./\$1,028,309

Average Recreational Landings 2000-2009 – 4,846,973 lbs., **2009** – 3,864,480 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (35 lbs.) 2000-2009 – 296, **2009** – 209

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) – Dolphin is currently included in the N.C Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to SAFMC FMP compliance requirements. The SAFMC approved an FMP for dolphin in 2004. The goal of the FMP is to maintain the current level of harvest. The allocation set in the FMP is 87% recreational and 13% commercial.

Research and Data Needs – Stock identification studies, migration, diet, batch fecundity, direct validation through mark and recapture to confirm scale annuli, collection of small, fishery-independent samples to accurately describe first year growth rates

Current Regulations – 10 fish/day for recreational anglers; charter vessel limit 60/trip; no recreational sale; permits for charter and commercial vessels

Harvest Season – Open year round; landings are seasonal

Size and Age at Maturity – 23 inches Total Length (TL)/4-6 months

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 4 years/3 years

Juvenile Abundance Index 2000-2009 – Unknown, **2009** –Unknown

Habits and Habitats – Dolphin are a Coastal/Oceanic highly migratory pelagic species. The current hypothesis suggests dolphin migrate from the central Caribbean through the mid-Atlantic to Bermuda and back to the central Caribbean, however the occurrence of year-round dolphin off the coast of North Carolina suggest dolphin likely have a more complex stock structure than originally thought. Dolphin are extremely fast growing (3.78 mm/day in the first 6 months), mature early, and have a protracted spawning season (year round, with highest levels from January through June).

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