



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 2, 2023

PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0749

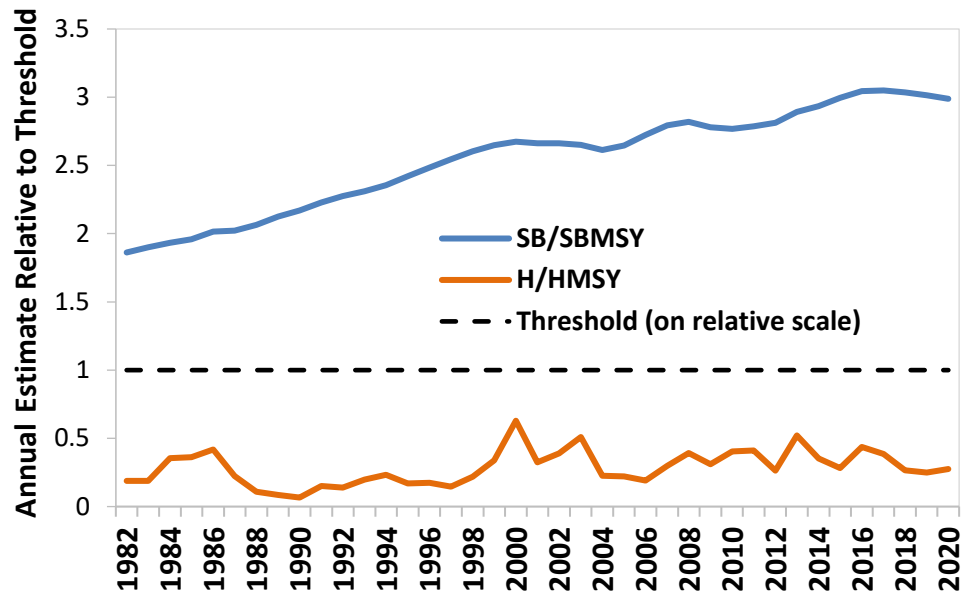
Black Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Find Stock to be Not Overfished nor Experiencing Overfishing

Arlington, VA – The 2023 Black Drum Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicates the Atlantic coastal stock of black drum are not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. The Commission’s Sciaenids Management Board approved the benchmark stock assessment and peer review report for management use. No management action was taken because there were no major concerns with the stock.

The assessment estimates annual spawning biomass (SB) and exploitation (H; i.e., the proportion of stock biomass removed by fishing). Estimates from the last year of the assessment (2020) are compared to the spawning biomass and exploitation associated with maximum sustainable yield¹ (MSY), SB_{MSY} , and H_{MSY} respectively, to determine stock status.

This assessment also developed indicators of stock abundance, and stock and fishery characteristics. The abundance indicators include several

Black Drum Relative Spawning Biomass and Exploitation



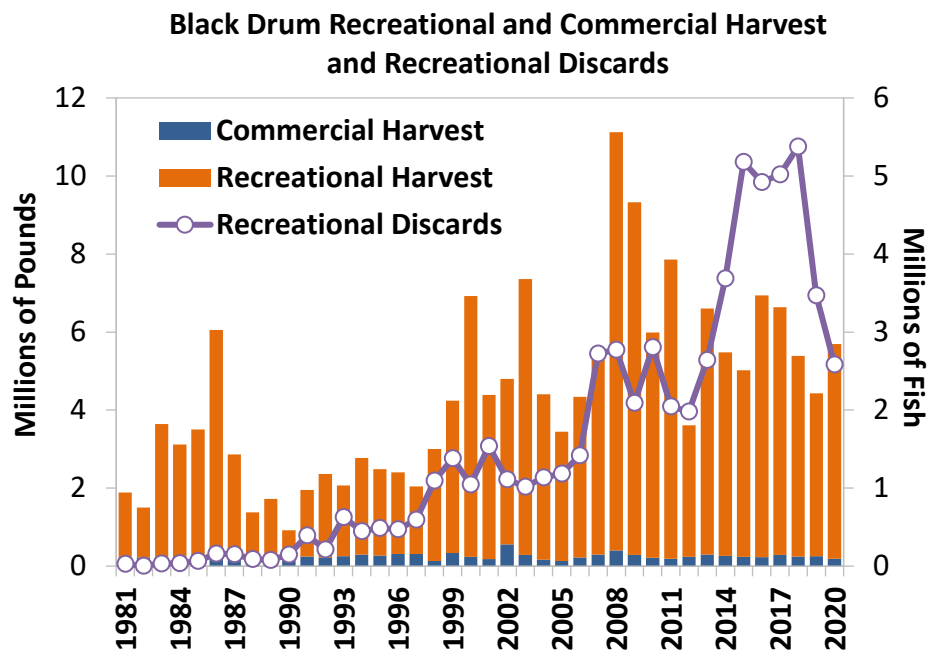
¹ MSY is the largest average catch that can be taken from a stock over time without negatively impacting the reproductive capacity of the stock.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species.

fishery-independent indices from the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic regions that track young-of-year and sub-adult fish. There is also one coastwide fishery-dependent index calculated from the Marine Recreational Information Program catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) that tracks all exploitable sizes of black drum. A majority of the indices show no clear trend, although the CPUE has been increasing throughout the time series (1982-2020). Several of the indices in the Mid-Atlantic saw greater recruitment events in the 1990s and 2000s than observed in more recent years. One index, the New Jersey Ocean Trawl, will serve as an indicator of range expansion, as black drum are becoming more common in the northern areas of their range.

Recreational harvest and discards, as well as commercial landings, will serve as indicators of fishery characteristics. Overall, there has been increased harvest in the past 20 years. The recreational fishery contributes a majority of the total harvest, with a smaller-scale commercial fishery occurring primarily in North Carolina and northward. Recreational harvest was moderately high in the mid-1980s and increased again starting around 2000, peaking in 2008 at 11 million pounds and has remained relatively high, especially in the South Atlantic. A majority of the recreational harvest occurs in Florida. Recreational discards had been steadily increasing and peaked in 2018 at 5.4 million fish, after which they declined.

Commercial landings have been fluctuating without trend in recent years, with peaks in 2002 and 2008 at roughly 555,000 pounds and 400,000 pounds, respectively. Gill nets, pound nets, and haul seines are the primary gears used in the commercial fishery.



Overall, the indicators do not show negative conditions, but will be monitored annually. Should any concerning trends occur, the Black Drum Technical Committee may recommend an expedited assessment in advance of the next benchmark stock assessment (tentatively 2028).

A stock assessment overview, which provides a more detailed description of assessment results, as well as the stock assessment and peer review report will be available on the Commission’s website at <https://asmfc.org/species/black-drum> under Stock Assessment Reports. For more information on the stock assessment, please contact Jeff Kipp, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist, at jkipp@asmfc.org; and for more information on black drum management, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org.

###