

Interim Measures for Spotted Seatrout

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Introduction

- Recent assessment showed stock is:
 - Overfished
 - Overfishing is occurring
- Projections indicated ~50% reduction required to achieve threshold

Introduction

- Population trends largely driven by cold stun events
- None since 2003
- Evidence that population may have improved since 2006
- Assessment needs to be updated

Introduction

- Results of recent data analysis suggest positive signs:
 - Large catches
 - Increases in CPUE
 - Expansion of age structure
- MFC & DMF agreed to update the assessment with 2007 & 2008 data
- Results expected this summer

What does this mean?

- SSB could be closer to threshold than in 2006
- Given potential changes in stock levels, % reduction required to rebuild the stock is uncertain
- However, fishing pressure likely remains high
- Makes biological sense to allow fish to reach a size allowing them to spawn at least once

Current Regulations

North Carolina

- 12" size limit
- 10 fish bag limit
- No trip limit
- No quota

Virginia

- 14" size limit
- 10 fish bag limit
- No trip limit
- Quota = 51,104 lb (never reached)

Maturity at Length

Length (in TL)	Females
10	59%
11	77%
12	89%
13	95%
14	98%
15	99%
16	100%

Assumptions

- VA's harvest assumed to remain the same
- Regulation changes only affect NC
- All % reductions are based on overall harvest (NC & VA)

Size Limit Analysis

Commercial Fishery

- Smaller component
- Mostly gill nets
- Catches larger, older fish

Recreational Fishery

- Larger component
- Hook and line
- Catches smaller, younger fish
- F rates 3 X larger than commercial
- Thus, will experience higher reduction

Give fish a chance to spawn at least once before they are harvested.

Size Limit Analysis

Pounds						
Percent Change						
Size Limit	Com Harvest	Rec Harvest	Total Harvest	Dead Discard	Harvest + Dead	
12	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
13	-1.4	-7.5	-6.1	11.1	-4.9	
14	-4.3	-20.1	-16.4	31.8	-13.1	
15	-9.2	-26.4	-22.3	48.4	-17.5	

Discussion

- Population size and catch rates are highly variable and largely dependent on environmental conditions
- Harvest reductions calculated only hold true if environmental parameters, recruitment, and fishing pressure in the future are similar to that seen in 2004 to 2006
- Expansion in age structure required for long-term sustainability
- A 14" size limit allows a much larger percentage of fish to spawn at least once before being harvested

DMF Recommendation

- 14" size limit
- Get results of updated assessment through 2008
- Additional changes should be made through the FMP process (bag limits, slot limits, trip limits, gear restrictions, seasonal closures, etc.)