

Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan

Amendment 1

Summary

The North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) adopted Amendment 1 to the Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan at its March 2025 business meeting. The 2022 stock assessment determined the Spotted Seatrout stock is not overfished, but overfishing is occurring. At least a 19.9% reduction in total harvest is needed to end overfishing of the Spotted Seatrout stock.

The goal of Amendment 1 is to manage the Spotted Seatrout fishery to maintain a self-sustaining population that provides sustainable harvest based on science-based decision-making processes. To ensure this goal is met, the MFC adopted management is projected to achieve an approximately 27% harvest reduction in the recreational fishery, a 30% harvest reduction in the commercial fishery, and a 27% overall harvest reduction. Amendment 1 management is projected to immediately end overfishing. Amendment 1 regulations will go into effect when the fishery reopens after the cold stun closure on July 1, 2025.

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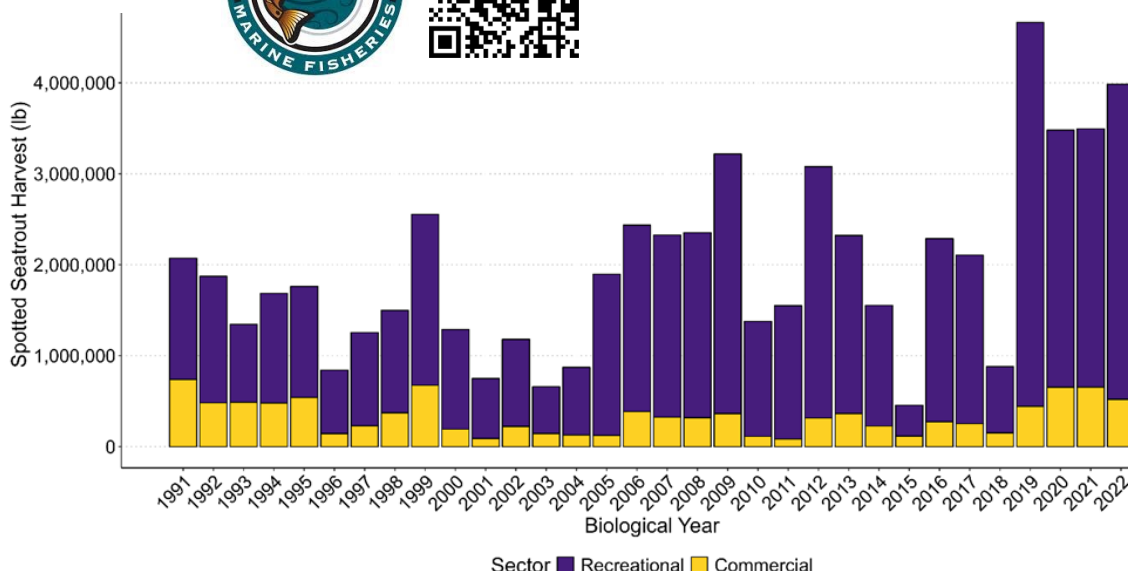
Recreational Fishery Management

- Implement a recreational 14 to 20 inch slot limit with an allowance for one fish over 26 inches.
- Implement a recreational 3-fish bag limit.



Rationale

The 14 to 20 inch slot limit with an allowance for one fish over 26 inches reduces harvest by allowing most fish over 20 inches to grow out of the fishery. The allowance for one fish over 26 inches does not significantly increase harvest, while still allowing anglers to harvest a trophy fish and be eligible for a state record. This, in combination with a reduction in bag limit to 3-fish per person per day provides necessary reductions while maintaining recreational access throughout the year.



Annual harvest of Spotted Seatrout in pounds by biological year (March–February) and sector, 1991–2022. Bars are total annual harvest with commercial harvest as the yellow portion and recreational harvest as the purple portion of the total.

Commercial Fishery

Management

- Implement a 11:59 P.M. Friday through 12:01 A.M. Monday commercial harvest closure from January 1 through September 30 and a 11:59 P.M. Friday through 12:01 A.M. Tuesday closure from October 1 through December 31.
- Formalize management of the Bogue Banks stop net fishery in the fishery management plan.

Rationale

The day of the week closure period matches what was done in Striped Mullet Amendment 2, reducing incidental catch of both species during closed periods.

Adaptive Management

- Adopt the adaptive management framework, with the caveat that adaptive management measures for sustainable harvest must be brought to the Commission for review prior to implementation.



Cold Stun Management

- Extend the harvest closure by 15 days, through June 30, following a cold stun.
- Adopt the cold stun adaptive management framework detailed in the plan



Timeline showing commercial fishery day-of-week harvest closure schedule.

Saturday-Sunday Closure									Saturday-Monday Closure		
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec



Spotted
Seatrout FMP
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Questions?

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