**Black Drum, *Pogonias cromis* (Linnaeus, 1766)**

**Life History**

Black Drum inhabit Florida estuaries as juveniles and occasionally move into near shelf waters as adults. The species occurs in nearshore waters from Nova Scotia south to Argentina. Gold and Richardson (1991) suggested that there was little differentiation into subpopulations in U.S. waters; although, Gold and Richardson (1998b) emphasized a significant degree of clinal variation among Black Drum mtDNA haplotypes along the U.S. Gulf of Mexico coast. Growth is fairly slow; 11”–14” at age 1, 15”–17” at age 2, and 19”–21” at age 3 (Table 1; Murphy and Taylor 1989; Murphy and Muller 1995; Jones and Wells 1998). Black Drum, the largest members of the family Sciaenidae, can reach over 46" and 120 pounds. Long-lived fish, Black Drum can reach almost 60 years of age (Murphy et al. 1998; Jones and Wells 1998; Campana and Jones 1998). Black Drum spawn during the winter–early spring. Females mature at age 4–6 years and are prodigious, multiple spawners. An average-sized female (13.4 pounds) may spawn 32-million eggs each year (Fitzhugh et al. 1993). Black Drum are primarily bottom feeders. Young Black Drum feed on small fish and invertebrates, such as copepods, annelids, and amphipods (Pearson 1929; Thomas 1971). Larger Black Drum in Texas estuaries eat mostly mollusks, crabs, and shrimps (Miles 1949). As juveniles, Black Drum are prey to a wide range of estuarine piscivores, e.g., spotted seatrout, crevalle jack. Larger drum are probably subject to predation by sharks (Murphy and Muller 1995).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>2017 Black Drum Landings by Sector</th>
<th>Total Annual Landings (lbs.) by Coast (1982-2017)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Black Drum 2017 Commercial Landings (lbs)" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Black Drum 2017 Recreational Landings (fish)" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Black Drum 2017 Recreational Landings (fish)" /></td>
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Fishers landed 6,074,927 pounds in 2017 which were 32.1% higher than the previous 5-year average (2012-2016). Coastwide, 68.3% of these were from the Atlantic and 31.7% were from the Gulf. Recreational landings constituted 99% of the total landings.
**Standardized Commercial Catch Rates:** Commercial catch rates on the Atlantic coast varied without major trend from 1992-2014 and increased to record highs in 2014-2017. Gulf coast commercial catch rates dropped between 1995 and 1998, remained stable through 2005, then increased variably through 2017. Dark grey figure lines represent first and third quartiles while the light grey lines represent the 2.5% – 97.5% quantiles.

**Standardized Recreational Total Catch Rates:** Total catch rates for recreational anglers on the Atlantic coast initially declined through 1995 and then variably increased to a timeseries high 2017. On the Gulf, total catch rates have been cyclic over the timeseries peaking in 2014; catch rates have remained stable the past 3 years. Dark grey figure lines represent first and third quartiles while the light grey lines represent the 2.5% – 97.5% quantiles.
Fishery-Independent Monitoring: The index of abundance for young-of-the-year (YOY) Black Drum on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts have been cyclic in trend. Stronger recruitment on the Atlantic coast was in years 1997, 2006, 2012, and 2016; stronger recruitment years on the Gulf coast were in 1998, 2005, 2008, and 2012. Post-YOY abundances on the Atlantic coast were cyclic in trend with an overall increase in post-YOY abundances from 2013-2017. Gulf coast post-YOY abundances were cyclic with an overall increasing trend through 2017. Abundances were highest in 1999, 2013, and 2017.
**Fish Health:** Gross external abnormalities in Black Drum were most prevalent in 2016-2017 on the Atlantic coast and in 2001 and 2014 on the Gulf coast. Red and bloody areas were the most common affliction observed in black drum on the Atlantic coast.
Stock Status
Current Condition: not overfished nor undergoing overfishing

Management History: An assessment of Black Drum in Florida indicated that under fishing mortalities estimated for the mid to late 1980s, their static spawning potential ratio was at least 26%–36% (Murphy and Muller 1995). Murphy and Muller (1995) concluded that the Black Drum stock in Florida could sustain the level of fishing occurring during the early 1990s. The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission developed a fishery management plan for Black Drum that recommended that states set size limits on the commercial fishery and bag limits on the recreational fishery (Leard et al. 1993). The plan did not recommend a Gulf-wide size limit because of low interest in the fishery at that time. A 14-inch minimum size limit, a 24-inch maximum size limit, and 500 pound commercial trip limit was enacted on both coasts to regulate Florida’s Black Drum fishery in 1989, with the goal of preventing the development of a high-volume purse-seine fishery.

For the most recent coastwide Black Drum assessment (ASMFC 2014), the Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SASC) evaluated over 70 fishery dependent and independent data sources across temporal, regional, and different life stages to describe the Black Drum Atlantic stock. Three catch-based methods were used: Catch-MSY, Depletion-Based Stock Reduction Analysis (DB-SRA; Dick and MacCall, 2011), and Depletion-Corrected Average Catch (DCAC; MacCall, 2009). The DB-SRA method was selected as the preferred method for estimating catch reference points. However, the confidence in abundance data reflective of the entire Black Drum stock was diminished following the analyses and highlighted the need for comprehensive abundance data. The Review Panel concluded the DB-SRA model be used to recommend the appropriate biological reference points with MSY recommended as the target biomass reference point and harvest at Fmsy recommended as the target F reference point. Although data quality was a concern, the Panel and the SASC agreed Black Drum is not experiencing overfishing and the population is not overfished (ASMFC 2015).