

## **2015 Maryland FMP Report (April 2016)**

### **Section 5. Black Drum (*Pogonias cromis*)**

The first coastwide stock assessment of black drum was approved for management use in February, 2015. The assessment determined the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring, therefore, no changes to the coastwide FMP were recommended by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). Commercial and recreational harvests have been stable the past few years.

#### **Chesapeake Bay FMP**

The Chesapeake Bay Black Drum Fishery Management Plan (CBBDFMP) was adopted in 1993 to address concerns about potential overfishing. The objectives of the plan include: 1) promoting coastwide coordination where possible; 2) promoting the protection of the resource through conservation goals and allocation; 3) maintaining the spawning stock to minimize recruitment failure; 4) promoting the collection of data; 5) promoting fair allocation; and 6) promoting water quality and habitat protection. Maryland's Fisheries Service conducted a review of the 1993 CBBDFMP in 2010 and determined that the plan is still an appropriate framework for managing the black drum stock.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Black Drum<sup>2</sup> (June 2013) (ASMFC FMP) was initiated because of increased recreational and commercial harvest, inconsistent coastwide regulations, unknown condition of the stock and concerns about harvesting immature and breeding black drum. All states are required to maintain their current level of restrictions on the black drum fishery and establish a maximum possession limit (January 1, 2014) and a minimum size limit of 14 inches (January 1, 2016). The Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions have implemented a more conservative minimum size of 16" since the mid-1990s.

#### **Stock Status**

The first coastwide benchmark stock assessment for black drum was conducted in 2014 and approved for management use in 2015.<sup>1</sup> The 2015 benchmark stock assessment used a Depletion Based – Stock Reduction Analysis and determined that the stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing.<sup>1</sup> The assessment indicated biomass was slowly decreasing, but remained well above the level needed to sustain maximum sustainable yield. Tagging data, life history data and nuclear microsatellite markers indicate black drum along the US Atlantic coast are from a single stock. If there are no changes in harvest and fishing mortality, the next benchmark stock assessment is scheduled for 2020.

#### **Current Management Measures**

Maryland closed its Chesapeake Bay commercial black drum fishery in 1999, but retains a limited Atlantic coastal commercial fishery with a 1,500 pound annual limit. Virginia manages its commercial fishery through limited entry and a total allowable catch of 120,000 pounds. Both states have a 16 inch minimum size limit and require mandatory commercial harvest reporting. Virginia established a special management zone in the southeast portion of the Chesapeake Bay for black drum, further restricting some commercial gear. The Potomac River Fisheries Commission also has a 16" minimum size limit and allows commercial fishermen 1 black drum per licensee per day. The harvest of black drum is primarily a recreational fishery. Both states and the Potomac River limit recreational harvest to 1 fish over 16".

#### **Issues/Concerns**

There are occasional requests from the Maryland commercial fishery to consider re-opening the commercial harvest of black drum in Chesapeake Bay. In addition, the 16" minimum size limit does not protect all immature black drum. Females reach 100 % maturity at 6 years of age and a length of 28".

Delaware and New Jersey have discussed the development of a joint DE-NJ black drum FMP as well as an increase in the minimum size limit to 32", but the minimum size limit remains 16" with a creel limit of 3 in both states. There is concern that the fisheries along the coast target both juvenile and adult black drum, and that the coastal fisheries are expanding. The 2015 coastwide stock assessment indicated a declining trend in biomass, but the stock is not currently experiencing overfishing. Continuing to monitor the stock through periodic assessment updates is recommended to insure expanding fisheries do not negatively impact stock status.

#### **The Fisheries**

Virginia has a spring gill net fishery that targets adult black drum. The remaining commercial harvest is primarily the bycatch of fisheries targeting other species (Figure 1). Recreational anglers occasionally target black drum in the spring of the year and harvest is sporadic especially in Maryland (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Reported Chesapeake Bay commercial harvest of black drum in pounds from Maryland and Virginia, 1981 - 2014.<sup>3</sup> PRFC landings are divided between the states by NMFS based on the state in which the fish are sold.

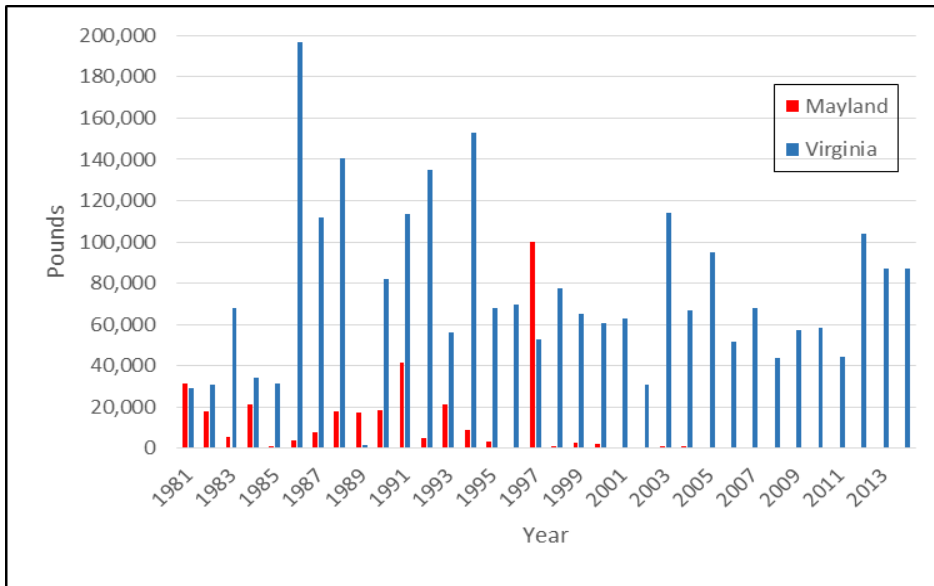
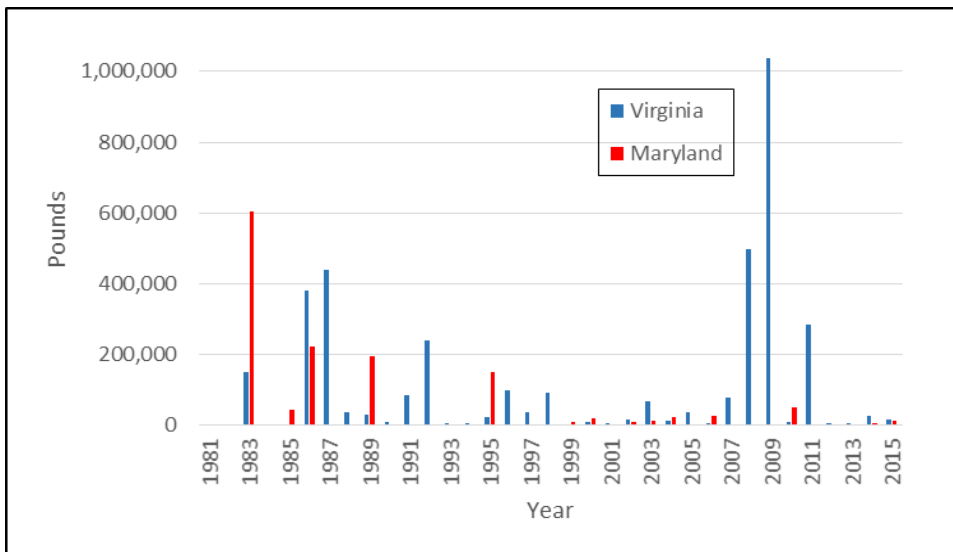


Figure 2. Recreational harvest estimate (MRIP) of black drum in pounds from inland waters for Maryland and Virginia, 1981 - 2015.<sup>4</sup> 2015 data is preliminary.



**References**

- <sup>1</sup> Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, February 2015. Black Drum Stock Assessment and Peer Review Reports. Arlington, VA. 351pp.
- <sup>2</sup> Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, June 2013. Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Black Drum. Arlington, VA. 72pp.
- <sup>3</sup> Personal communication from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division. April 14, 2016. <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/commercial/>.
- <sup>4</sup> Personal communication from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division. April 14, 2016. <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/recreational/index.html>.

**1993 Chesapeake Bay Program Black Drum Implementation** (updated 5/16)

<b>Problem Area</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1. Status of Stock	1. Virginia (VA) will continue tagging black drum to determine coastal movements of the Chesapeake Bay Stock, fund research to determine age, fecundity, and spawning periodicity, and sample the commercial and recreational catch to determine length, weight, and sex. Maryland (MD) will continue to support the Old Dominion University (ODU) drum tagging study	Continue Completed          2014	VA's tagging program is opportunistic and the ODU tagging study is complete. ODU has an ongoing otolith aging study for black drum. Forty-eight black drum were collected in 2007 with an average age of 33.8 years (range 0- 64 years). MD conducted an adult tagging program from commercial pound nets in 1998 and 1999. ASMFC conducted a peer reviewed coastwide stock assessment in 2014/2015. <sup>1</sup> The assessment determined black drum were not overfished and overfishing was not occurring. Priority research recommendations include increased age and length samples from commercial and recreational fisheries, better bycatch information including lengths of discarded fish, continued fishery independent surveys and the development of an adult fishery independent survey.
2. Fishing Mortality	2a VA will limit entry into the commercial black drum fishery & continue to require commercial black drum fisherman & buyer to obtain a permit and report weekly. VA will continue a 16-inch minimum size limit, 120,000 pound commercial quota, a 1 fish/person/day recreational creel limit, and continue monitoring commercial and recreational landings.	1992; 1994; Continue	Fully implemented. VA will emphasize the need for timely reporting.
	2b MD will adopt a 16 inch minimum size limit and a 1 fish/person/day recreational creel limit	1994 Continue	MD REG: COMAR 08.02.05.15 The minimum size limit (16") with a creel limit of 1 fish/person/day and a maximum of 6 fish/boat.
	2c Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PFRC) will consider similar size and bag limits once VA and MD regulations are established	1994 Continue	PFRC adopted a 16-inch minimum size limit and 1 fish/person/day creel limit for recreational and commercial fisheries
	2d MD and PFRC will assess the need for commercial black drum harvest restrictions as data becomes available	1994 Continue	MD- Beginning in 1998, the commercial catch of black drum from the coastal bays and tributaries, and the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries is prohibited except for scientific investigation. Total allowable landings from the Atlantic Ocean are 1,500 pounds.

**1993 Chesapeake Bay Program Black Drum Implementation** (updated 5/16)

<b>Problem Area</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
3. Gear Conflicts	3. VA has established a Special Black Drum Management Zone, for “high use” areas such as the Cabbage Patch and Latimer Shoals. During May 1 through June 7, no gill net or trot line may be in established zone from 7:00 AM to 8:30 PM.	1992; Continue	Established to address commercial and recreational area and time conflicts.
4. Habitat Issues	4.1-7 Bay jurisdictions will continue to set water quality goals and review management programs under the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement	Continue	The CBP completed a Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement in 2014, which set new goals and outcomes for restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. A copy of the 2014 agreement can be found on the CBP website at <a href="http://www.chesapeakebay.net/documents/FINAL_Ches_Bay_Watershed_Agreement_withsignatures-Hires.pdf">http://www.chesapeakebay.net/documents/FINAL_Ches_Bay_Watershed_Agreement_withsignatures-Hires.pdf</a> The Agreement has fish habitat, blue crab, oyster, SAV and water quality outcomes that when reached will enhance habitat and prey availability for juvenile and adult black drum.

**Acronyms**

ASMFC – Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
 COMAR – Code of Maryland Regulations  
 MRIP – Marine Recreational Information Program  
 ODU – Old Dominion University