

**THE 1998-1999  
WRECKFISH FISHERY  
ANNUAL REPORT**

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## Description

This report is a summarization of the data available as of January 28, 1999, from the 1998-1999 Wreckfish vessel logbook program. Descriptive statistics and summary data were developed to compare the just finished season with information collected during the 1991-1992, 1992-1993, 1993-1994, 1994-1995, 1995-1996, 1996-1997, and 1997-1998 seasons. Beginning with the 1992-1993 season, this fishery has been managed under an Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system, the first implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Region.

There are currently only 11 permitted vessels in the fishery, down from ninety-one in the 1991-1992 season and thirty-eight in the 92-93 season. Landings of wreckfish have been confined to ports in Florida and South Carolina since the beginning of the 1995 season. South Carolina accounted for the majority of the total catch for the 1998-1999 season . Only 3 vessels actually reported landings of wreckfish this season.

## Methodology

Since the beginning of the 1992-93 wreckfish season, four separate but related data collection systems have been used. The ITQ system of management for this fishery began in April 1992. Under this plan the fishing season begins on April 16 and runs through January 14 of the next year.

Landings, effort, and participation data are primarily collected by the Wreckfish Vessel

**Logbook.** A monthly Wreckfish Dealer reporting system provides partial verification for the Logbook as well as price and sales data.

A two part Coupon System that is included in both the logbook program and the dealer reporting system provides additional verification data, as well as serving as an enforcement aid, and providing additional management data, not available from the other two systems. The coupon system also records annual catch quota transfers, if any occur.

The sale or transfer of Wreckfish fishery shares is recorded by another system operated by the NMFS Southeast Regional Office.

Vessel identifying codes have been maintained for each unique vessel across the eight seasons (including the non-ITQ managed 1991-1992 season) to allow for the tracking of the activities of individual participants for each season and to allow comparisons among seasons for each vessel and for all vessels.

The vessel logbook enters in a reasonably accurate and complete way total landings, numbers of wreckfish, the dates of departure and return, duration of trip, and vessel and dealer identifiers for each trip. In a less accurate and complete way it also records bycatch, gear, fishing time, fishing location, and fishing depth data for each trip. There may be some missing (not-reported) data for some of these "secondary" trip characteristics, but records with blank or missing data are excluded from the analysis of that particular fishing parameter.

#### **Landings, Size and Fishing Effort Comparisons**

The 1998-1999 Wreckfish season ended on January 14, 1999, with 210,800 pounds of landings (whole weight) reported as of January 28, 1999 (Table 1). There

were 36 trips by 3 individual vessels reported, compared to 56 trips and 95 trips by 7 and 9 vessels, respectively, in the previous two seasons (Table 1). There were 3 vessels active in this season that had also been active in each of the previous seven seasons . This year tables by State and by Vessel are not included due to confidentiality.

### Ex-Vessel Prices

The average price reported paid to fishermen for wreckfish in the 1998-1999 season was \$2.22 per pound (gutted weight). This represents a 2% increase from the \$2.17 of the previous season.

**Table 1. 1991-1992 through 1998-1999 Wreckfish Season Comparisons. Mean size, catch per hour and catch per day are means based on individual trips.**

SEASON	Total Number					Mean				
	Vessels	Trips	Days	Pounds *	Fish	Size *	Catch per Trip *	Days per Trip	Catch per Hour*	Catch per Day*
91	38	308	2,164	1,926,088	57,704	33.35	6,254	7.03	196.92	983.78
92	20	222	1,516	1,270,557	38,205	33.2	5,723	6.83	183.56	931.57
93	19	210	1,531	1,144,726	33,803	33.97	5,451	7.29	152.32	758.26
94	17	201	1,602	1,203,265	35,770	34.11	5,986	7.97	193.04	813.75
95	13	140	946	644,997	19,256	33.67	4,607	6.76	218.4	750.52
96	9	95	762	396,868	11,657	34.21	4,178	7.84 **	164.24	547.84 **
97	7	56	403	249,715	7,299	34.02	4,459	7.02***	200.04	628.30***
98	3	36****	266****	210,800	6,174	34.43	5,856	7.39****	236.67	790.71****

**Note: Days fished and number of wreckfish were estimated for the last trip in the 1998-1999 season since the Vessel log has not been received.**

- \* All weights in whole pounds.
- \*\* Dropping 25 day trip (including a major breakdown). Including this trip would increase mean days per trip to 8.02 and reduce mean catch per day to 542.74.
- \*\*\* Dropping 17 day trip (tuna fishing also). Including this trip would increase mean days per trip to 7.20 and reduce mean catch per day to 620.23.
- \*\*\*\* Dropping 1 trip with no landings (mechanical problems).

