

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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J. Leonard Ledbetter, Commissioner

Duane Harris, Director

Coastal Resources Division

912/264-7218

23 July 1985

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Susan Shipman

FROM: John Pafford

SUBJECT: Regulatory Recommendation Concerning Spotted Seatrout

Fishing regulation for spotted seatrout as follows:

Establish a minimum size limit of twelve (12) inches total length for the minimum creel length for spotted seatrout (Cynoscion nebulosus).

Supportive biological and recreational fishery data for the above regulation are as follows:

- Based on commercial landings for Georgia, spotted seatrout have generally declined in number during the past 10 years.
- Spotted seatrout mature in their second or third year of life when approximately 9 to 12 inches in length.
- Based on findings of the Marine Recreational Fishery statistics survey, Atlantic and Gulf Coasts (Ron Essig, personal communication), approximately 40 percent of all spotted seatrout landed by recreational anglers in Georgia in the past six years were less than 12 inches in length.
- A minimum size of 12 inches would allow most seatrout an opportunity to spawn at least once before entering the recreational fishery.
- This measure would allow a greater number of seatrout an opportunity to spawn and produce a higher recruitment.
- The proposed regulatory measure is and agrees with regulations recommended in the interstate Spotted Seatrout Plan adopted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, of which Georgia is a member, at the 1984 annual meeting.

CRD recreational fishery biologists believe the major factor resulting in the low numbers of spotted seatrout caught by Georgia anglers since 1977 is the direct effect of the frequent severe winters recorded in the past 10 years. Both adult and juvenile seatrout concentrate in the shallow middle and upper portions of the estuary during the winter months which makes the species susceptible to winter kills resulting from severe cold fronts.

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Such a measure would increase the recovery rate of Georgia's spotted seatrout population after severe winters and produce an increased yield per recruit. If you have any questions or comments regarding this proposed measure, please feel free to contact me concerning the above information.

JP/lw

cc: Nick Nicholson
Jim Music
Henry Ansley