

FYI: From SCDNR News - Jan 30, 2006

2005-06 Commercial shrimp season total appears down

Landings numbers for the Jan. 21 end of commercial shrimping appear to be down for the 2005-2006 season, according to the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, although season totals will not be available for several weeks.

While the 2005 roe shrimp season was below average, a relatively good spawn was observed as well as an average number of shrimp taken in state waters during the fall. Preliminary information from a survey of shrimp baiters indicates that recreational catch rates improved in 2005 and was above what was previously recorded in 2004.

Reduced commercial landings are likely related to reduced fishing activity by trawlers because of relatively poor prices for shrimp and increasing fuel prices. According to S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) biologist Mark Maddox, "There are two thirds as many commercial trawlers licensed as there were in 2000, which was the last year that shrimpers received a good price for their catch." The more active shrimpers had a strong year, but with far fewer boats participating, the landing numbers will not be reflective of the overall good season.

For more information on the shrimp harvest contact: DNR, Marine Resources Division, PO Box 12559, Charleston, SC 29422 or call (843) 953-9309 in Charleston.

The DNR closed state waters to commercial shrimping on Jan. 21. The season opened to commercial shrimp trawling June 6, 2005, in provisional areas along the seaward state waters line, and all other state trawling areas opened June.15, 2005.

"The season has run a little longer this year than normal because of relatively warm water temperatures and good quantities of medium and large shrimp," said David Whitaker, director of the DNR's Office of Fisheries Management. "We are now learning of many small shrimp showing up in catches. Small shrimp present this time of year become the bulk of our important spring spawning stocks; therefore, we would like to protect these important shrimp."

Three seasons define the commercial shrimp calendar. The first, roe shrimp season, begins in the spring and opens to trawling when the DNR has judged that an ample quantity of this high-value shrimp have had an opportunity to spawn. The brown shrimp season typically occurs from late June to mid- August. The fall white shrimp season, composed of offspring from the spring roe crop, carries out the remainder of the three seasons.

Total shrimp landed in 2005 (information through November) were 2.04 million pounds (shrimp weighed heads-off) with a market value of \$2.59 per pound. Although incomplete, these figures depict a slight change compared with 2004, which saw landings of 3.34 million pounds and a market value of \$2.52. The figures indicate a 60 percent decline from the "good season" of 2000, in which commercial shrimpers landed 3.89 million pounds with a \$3.99 per pound market value.

South Carolina commercial shrimp landings (heads-off) and average price per pound are as follows:

2000: 3.89 million pounds, Average price \$3.99/pound

2001: 2.81 million pounds, average price \$3.11/pound

2002: 3.30 million pounds, average price \$2.70/pound

2003: 3.94 million pounds, average price \$2.23/pound

2004: 3.34 million pounds, average price \$2.52/pound

2005: 2.04 million pounds (preliminary figures through November), average price:
\$2.59/pound.