

Job Report

Joseph P. Breuer
Marine Biologist

Project No. MF-M-2 Date March 5, 1964
Project Name: Marine Fisheries Management in Texas
Period Covered: December 1, 1962 to May 31, 1963 Job No. 2

Contract Drum Fishing, Lower Laguna Madre Computation of Record of Catch Data

Abstract: Of the 462,577 pounds of dressed black drum harvested during the 1962-63 season in Cameron and Willacy Counties, 31 per cent were under 5 pounds in weight, 43.5 per cent were between 5 and 10 pounds, and 22.5 per cent were over 10 pounds. During the 1961-62 season, 70 per cent of the black drum harvested were under 5 pounds in weight.

The calculated live weight of the total landings was 685,558 pounds, which sold for a total of \$30,315.60 or an average of 7.396 cents per pound.

The average catch per day per contractor was 449.8 pounds compared to 361.9 pounds for the 1961-62 season, the increase due to the larger size of the drum present.

Deeper water areas yielded a consistently better catch than shallow waters, as the larger drum, which were more abundant, preferred deeper waters.

The average pounds per net day (300 feet of net per 24-hour period) was 65.1 with the peak of harvest occurring in mid-January 1963.

Objectives: To obtain, compile, and analyze data submitted by contract net fishermen on the monthly record-of-catch data forms as required by regulations.

Procedure: By the authority of local laws passed by the Texas Legislature, this department completed its sixth consecutive season in which black drum were harvested from the waters of the Laguna Madre in Cameron and Willacy Counties. These local laws limited the season during which black drum may be removed by nets to December, January, February, and March in Cameron County and January, February, March, April, and May in Willacy County. The purpose of the program is to reduce and then control the excessively large black drum population which is detrimental to the sports fish of the area and which, prior to this program, resulted in a wasted, unharvested fishery resource.

Currently, and since its inception, this drum harvest is accomplished by awarding permits to commercial fishermen to use gill nets for the taking of black drum in accordance with the laws of the State of Texas and the rules and regulations of this department.

The current rules and regulations require that each permit holder keep a daily record of the area of the bay fished, the number and weight of heads-on and heads-off black drum harvested, the mesh size and length of gill nets used, the number of hours the nets have been set, and the price per pound received for the fish sold. This daily record is submitted monthly on data forms provided by the Department (Figure 1).

Findings and

Discussion:

All monthly data forms were received and their data compiled and analyzed. Pertinent data were used to evaluate the catch per unit of effort, value received for the total catch, and relative abundance of various age groups. Comparisons were made with information obtained in reports from the previous year.

Of the 462,577 pounds of drum taken during the 1962-63 season (dressed weight), 157,621 pounds or 34 per cent were drum weighing 5 pounds or less and were sold gutted and gilled. During the 1961-62 season, 70 per cent of the total drum harvest was composed of drum of this size. This drop of 36 per cent in choice drum indicates the comparative shortage of small drum over the entire permit area during the 1962-63 season.

Of the remaining 304,956 pounds (dressed weight) or 66 per cent of the total landings, an estimated 103,877 pounds or 22.5 per cent were large bull drum and were sold collared and gutted, with roe and air bladder removed. The remaining 201,079 pounds or 43.5 per cent were sold gutted and headed.

Using 19 per cent as the average loss in gutting and gilling the 157,621 pounds of choice drum, 29 per cent as the average weight loss in heading and gutting the 201,079 pounds of medium drum, and 50 per cent as the average weight loss in gutting and collaring the 103,877 pounds of large bull drum, the total calculated live weight of the season's catch is 685,558 pounds.

While the 462,577 pounds of drum (dressed weight) taken represents a 17.7 per cent drop from the 562,034 pounds of drum taken in the 1961-62 season, the comparison of the calculated live weight of 685,558 pounds represents only a 5.5 per cent drop from the 1961-62 season catch of 725,561 pounds. The reason for this apparent discrepancy was the relative shortage of small choice drum with low weight loss and the corresponding abundance of large drum with a higher weight loss when dressed for market during the 1962-63 season. Other factors which affected the total harvest were the general shortage of drum within the permit area during the final weeks of the season, the relatively poor and limited market for the abundant large drum, and the new legislative restriction which removed nets, during the last two months of the season, from the water which lies west of the Intracoastal Waterway in Willacy County.

The average number of pounds of drum taken per day per contractor ranged from 99.1 to 880.7 pounds of dressed drum with an average of 449.8 pounds. This compares with the range of from 106.7 to 678.8 pounds and an average of 361.9 pounds per day per contractor during the 1961-62 season. The drop in the low average from 106.7 to 99.1 was due, in part at least, to the fact that several contractors owned only small mesh nets and were prepared to harvest only the small choice drum, which were scarce. The increase for the high average from 678.8 to 880.7 was due to the fact that one contractor possessed both large and small mesh nets and was able to fish the larger mesh nets when only large drum were present. The increase in the average from 361.9 to 449.8 pounds per day per contractor was because most fishermen under contract were able to fish larger mesh nets and effectively harvest large drum when small drum were scarce.

During the 1961-62 season, the 558,074 pounds of drum (dressed weight) sold for \$46,849.26. This represents an average of 8.394 cents per pound for the entire harvest. The 409,877 pounds of drum (dressed weight) harvested during the 1962-63 season sold for \$30,315.60 for an average of 7.396 cents per pound. This drop in value per pound would be expected with the decrease in the number of small choice drum and an increase in the number of larger fish.

Table 1 shows the range in prices paid for drum each month, the pounds sold at each price, and the value received.

To calculate the catch per unit of effort in various parts of the permit area, a change was made in the catch data form used during the 1962-63 season. A space was provided on the form to note the area fished, and a map on the reverse side showed these numbered areas (Figure 2). The boundaries of the 11 areas were based on natural and artificial boundaries separating zones of varying type habitat. The description of the area and its boundaries was printed with the map.

Areas 1 through 7 were located in Cameron County and were available for fishing from December 1, 1962, to March 31, 1963. Areas 8 through 11 were located in Willacy County and were available for fishing from January 1, 1963, to May 31, 1963.

Table 2 shows the pounds of drum landed (dressed weight), net days fished, and pounds per net day by area and by 10-day periods beginning December 1, 1962. A net day is defined as one 300-foot long gill net set for a period of 24 hours. "Pounds per net day" is the number of pounds of drum (dressed weight) harvested in a net day. Totals and averages are also given in the table, both by period and by area.

Area 1 is seldom fished and is productive only when drum are migrating near Brazos Santiago Pass. Catches here are usually in the extreme, either very poor or excellent as shown in the table. Areas 2, 3, and 5 are primarily deep water regions of Port Isabel Bay which provided the bulk of the bull drum harvested from Cameron County during the season. Areas 4 and 7 are primarily shallow water regions and are inhabited by smaller choice drum. Area 6 contains very little water, all of which is quite shallow. This area is seldom fished, except as a desperate measure to locate drum when all other areas have failed.

In Willacy County, Areas 8 and 10 contain mostly shallow water which yields chiefly small drum. The bulk of the Willacy County drum harvest came from the deeper waters of Areas 9 and 11.

Because of the abundance of large-sized drum throughout most of the season, and because these large drum inhabit deeper waters of the area, the best catches per unit of effort came from Areas 3 and 11. Areas 2, 5, and 9, with predominately moderately deep water, were somewhat less productive than other extensively fished areas. The shallow water areas and those fished only occasionally produced the poorest harvest.

The average pounds per net day by areas ranged from 30.3 to 129.9, although both of these figures came from areas in which there was limited fishing pressure. The average pounds per net day by period ranged from 12.2 to 104.2. The average catch per net day for the total catch in all areas through all periods was 65.1 pounds. Using both total pounds and pounds per net day, the peak harvest in all areas occurred in the 5th period with a second smaller peak in the 10th period.

Comments: Apparent discrepancies in the total pounds of dressed drum used in this report can be clarified. The total pounds of dressed drum landed by all methods and in all areas during the entire contract season were 462,577. The total of 409,877 pounds of dressed drum reported in Table 1 represents those drum which were sold and does not include those drum landed for which there was no sale. The 446,601 pounds of dressed drum reported in Table 2 represent those drum which were harvested by set gill nets and do not include those drum taken by strike methods.

The decrease in the number of smaller drum over the past season was quite evident to the contract fishermen and required a change in fishing operations

which were then directed toward the more abundant larger drum. This corresponding increase in larger drum size was also noted in the analysis of the data on catch per unit of effort, comparative catches with small and large mesh nets, in shallow and deep water areas, in price paid per pound and value received, and in pounds caught per day per contractor.

The reason for this population structure change is not known, although such factors as the effects of previous drum harvests, the killing freeze of January 1961, meteorological and hydrographic changes in this and other areas, and spawning failure are among those factors which could be considered.

While it was regrettable that small, choice drum were scarce, from the fishermen's standpoint, it was fortunate that the price of large drum, which were so abundant, was steady and that these fish were marketable throughout the season. Had this market not existed, these large drum would not have been harvested.

The population change which occurred also pointed out several items which should be of value to the fishermen in the future. First, each season is separate and distinctly different from all past seasons and that there apparently is no such thing as an "average" season or year. Second, it is becoming apparent that a contract fisherman must have several complete strings of nets of varying mesh sizes so that a profitable harvest can be effected regardless of the size of the drum present.

The revised record of catch data form used during the 1962-63 season will be used, without change, in the 1963-64 season so that catch per unit of effort data can be compared from year to year and so that an attempt can be made to determine the effects of this management program on the black drum populations of the area.

Prepared by: Joseph P. Breuer
Marine Biologist

Ernest G. Simmons
Regional Supervisor

Approved by

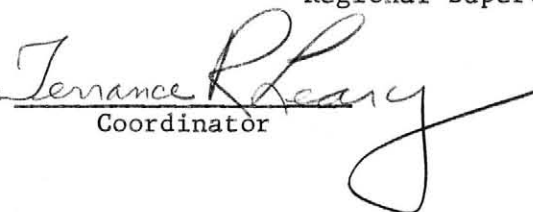

Coordinator

Table 1
Pounds of Dressed Drum Sold and Value Received

Price Paid Per Pound	December	January	February	March	April	May	Total
	-	4,646	6,494	19	-	-	11,159
3¢		\$ 139.38	\$ 194.82	\$.57			\$ 334.77
	-	-	16,232	13,267	-	-	29,499
4¢			\$ 649.28	\$ 530.68			\$ 1,179.96
	272	13,747	49,452	-	-	-	63,471
5¢	\$ 13.60	\$ 687.35	\$2,472.60				\$ 3,173.55
	3,632	18,658	18,641	2,025	-	-	42,956
6¢	\$ 217.92	\$ 1,119.48	\$1,118.46	\$ 121.50			\$ 2,577.36
	11,597	39,643	6,473	24,993	-	-	82,706
7¢	\$ 811.79	\$ 2,775.01	\$ 453.11	\$1,749.51			\$ 5,789.42
	22,923	21,246	11,347	8,254	-	-	63,770
8¢	\$1,833.84	\$ 1,699.68	\$ 907.76	\$ 660.32			\$ 5,101.60
	-	6,014	1,289	18,282	7,737	-	33,322
9¢		\$ 541.26	\$ 116.01	\$1,645.38	\$ 696.33		\$ 2,998.98
	17,177	13,544	1,560	105	509	317	33,212
10¢	\$1,717.70	\$ 1,354.40	\$ 156.00	\$ 10.50	\$ 50.90	\$ 31.70	\$ 3,321.20
	-	29,228	168	4,413	-	-	33,809
11¢		\$ 3,215.08	\$ 18.48	\$ 485.43			\$ 3,718.99
	127	-	-	1,827	-	33	1,987
12¢	\$ 15.24			\$ 219.24		\$ 3.96	\$ 238.44
	-	-	245	4,989	3,807	-	9,041
13¢			\$ 31.85	\$ 648.57	\$ 494.91		\$ 1,175.33
	-	-	-	-	2,422	1,153	3,575
14¢					\$ 339.08	\$161.42	\$ 500.50
	-	-	-	-	-	1,370	1,370
15¢						\$205.50	\$ 205.50
Total	55,728 \$4,610.09	146,726 \$11,531.64	111,901 \$6,118.37	78,174 \$6,071.70	14,475 \$1,581.22	2,873 \$402.58	409,877 \$30,315.60

Table 2

Pounds, Net Days, and Pounds Per Net Day by Periods and Areas of Set Gill Nets in Cameron and Willacy Counties, December 1, 1962, to May 31, 1963, with Totals and Averages

Period	Dates	AREA 1			AREA 2			AREA 3			AREA 4		
		Pounds	Net Days	P/ND	Pounds	Net Days	P/ND	Pounds	Net Days	P/ND	Pounds	Net Days	P/ND
1	12/ 1/62 12/10/62	-	-	-	4,500	213	21.1	15,364	93	165.2	84	16	5.3
2	12/11/62 12/20/62	-	-	-	3,669	136	26.9	10,751	128	84.0	102	3	34.0
3	12/21/62 12/30/62	211	16	13.2	12,392	278	44.6	431	24	17.9	92	5	18.4
4	12/31/62 1/ 9/63	60	8	7.5	8,308	165	50.4	1,811	121	14.9	268	20	13.4
5	1/10/63 1/19/63	3,368	4	842.0	3,213	62	51.8	29,243	265	110.4	-	-	-
6	1/20/63 1/29/63	-	-	-	505	36	14.0	30,125	322	93.6	-	-	-
7	1/30/63 2/ 8/63	-	-	-	1,321	24	55.0	20,872	220	94.9	506	20	25.3
8	2/ 9/63 2/18/63	-	-	-	1,331	16	83.2	5,018	68	73.8	-	-	-
9	2/19/63 2/28/63	-	-	-	2,071	24	86.3	4,419	40	110.5	-	-	-
10	3/ 1/63 3/10/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,785	72	149.8	2,179	24	90.8
11	3/11/63 3/20/63	-	-	-	661	16	41.3	1,435	24	59.8	559	16	34.9
12	3/21/63 3/30/63	-	-	-	6,564	120	54.7	-	-	-	636	32	19.9
13	3/31/63 4/ 9/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	4/10/63 4/19/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	4/20/63 4/29/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	4/30/63 5/ 9/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	5/10/63 5/19/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	5/20/63 5/29/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL		3,639	28		44,535	1,090		130,254	1,377		4,426	136	
AVERAGE				129.9			40.9			94.6			32.5

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	12/21/62												
3	12/30/62	211	16	13.2	12,392	278	44.6	431	24	17.9	92	5	18.4
	12/31/62												
4	1/ 9/63	60	8	7.5	8,308	165	50.4	1,811	121	14.9	268	20	13.4
	1/10/63												
5	1/19/63	3,368	4	842.0	3,213	62	51.8	29,243	265	110.4	-	-	-
	1/20/63												
6	1/29/63	-	-	-	505	36	14.0	30,125	322	93.6	-	-	-
	1/30/63												
7	2/ 8/63	-	-	-	1,321	24	55.0	20,872	220	94.9	506	20	25.3
	2/ 9/63												
8	2/18/63	-	-	-	1,331	16	83.2	5,018	68	73.8	-	-	-
	2/19/63												
9	2/28/63	-	-	-	2,071	24	86.3	4,419	40	110.5	-	-	-
	3/ 1/63												
10	3/10/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,785	72	149.8	2,179	24	90.8
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11	3/20/63	-	-	-	661	16	41.3	1,435	24	59.8	559	16	34.9
	3/21/63												
12	3/30/63	-	-	-	6,564	120	54.7	-	-	-	636	32	19.9
	3/31/63												
13	4/ 9/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	4/10/63												
14	4/19/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	4/20/63												
15	4/29/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	4/30/63												
16	5/ 9/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	5/10/63												
17	5/19/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	5/20/63												
18	5/29/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL		3,639	28		44,535	1,090		130,254	1,377		4,426	136	
AVERAGE				129.9			40.9			94.6			32.5

Table 2--Continued

Period	Dates	AREA 5				AREA 6				AREA 7				AREA 8			
		Pounds	Net	Days	P/ND	Pounds	Net	Days	P/ND	Pounds	Net	Days	P/ND	Pounds	Net	Days	P/ND
1	12/ 1/62 12/10/62	502		20	25.1	-		-	-	2,032		18	112.9	-		-	-
2	12/11/62 12/20/62	1,847		120	15.4	316		8	39.5	-		-	-	-		-	-
3	12/21/62 12/30/62	1,330		37	35.9	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-
4	12/31/62 1/ 9/63	1,713		84	20.4	-		-	-	-		-	-	1,340		13	103.4
5	1/10/63 1/19/63	5,780		66	87.6	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-
6	1/20/63 1/29/63	3,524		54	65.3	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-
7	1/30/63 2/ 8/63	6,557		172	38.1	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-
8	2/ 9/63 2/18/63	16,191		264	61.3	-		-	-	2,069		24	86.2	-		-	-
9	2/19/63 2/28/63	25,023		320	78.2	-		-	-	1,502		12	125.2	-		-	-
10	3/ 1/63 3/10/63	21,080		280	75.3	-		-	-	825		40	20.6	-		-	-
11	3/11/63 3/20/63	21,805		264	82.5	-		-	-	791		72	11.0	-		-	-
12	3/21/63 3/30/63	444		24	18.5	-		-	-	296		40	7.4	2,113		60	35.2
13	3/31/63 4/ 9/63	-		-	-	-		-	-	69		8	8.6	184		4	46.0
14	4/10/63 4/19/63	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-
15	4/20/63 4/29/63	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-
16	4/30/63 5/ 9/63	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-
17	5/10/63 5/19/63	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-
18	5/20/63 5/29/63	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-
TOTAL		105,796		1,705		316		8		7,584		214		3,637		77	
AVERAGE					62.0				39.5				35.4				47.2

Table 2--Continued

Period	Dates	AREA 9			AREA 10			AREA 11			ALL AREAS		
		Pounds	Net Days	P/ND	Pounds	Net Days	P/ND	Pounds	Net Days	P/ND	Pounds	Net Days	P/ND
1	12/ 1/62 12/10/62	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22,482	360	62.4
2	12/11/62 12/20/62	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16,685	395	42.2
3	12/21/62 12/30/62	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,456	360	40.1
4	12/31/62 1/ 9/63	1,763	78	22.6	892	28	31.8	4,474	95	47.1	20,629	612	33.7
5	1/10/63 1/19/63	3,928	47	83.6	518	16	32.4	19,420	168	115.6	65,470	628	104.2
6	1/20/63 1/29/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	15,547	217	71.6	49,701	629	79.0
7	1/30/63 2/ 8/63	54	4	13.5	-	-	-	17,629	175	100.7	46,939	615	76.3
8	2/ 9/63 2/18/63	1,829	32	57.5	-	-	-	6,651	117	56.9	33,089	521	63.3
9	2/19/63 2/28/63	214	8	26.7	-	-	-	14,352	172	83.4	47,581	576	82.7
10	3/ 1/63 3/10/63	947	8	118.4	-	-	-	16,482	183	90.0	52,298	607	86.1
11	3/11/63 3/20/63	145	4	36.3	-	-	-	15,680	128	122.5	41,076	524	81.5
12	3/21/63 3/30/63	3,139	77	40.8	-	-	-	5,567	99	56.2	18,759	452	41.4
13	3/31/63 4/ 9/63	6,032	125	48.2	80	3.5	22.8	2,079	68	30.5	8,444	208.5	40.5
14	4/10/63 4/19/63	2,368	75	31.5	162	7	23.1	409	20	20.5	2,939	102	28.8
15	4/20/63 4/29/63	329	40	8.2	-	-	-	3,403	128	26.5	3,732	128	29.2
16	4/30/63 5/ 9/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	780	64	12.2	780	64	12.2
17	5/10/63 5/19/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,197	72	16.6	1,197	72	16.6
18	5/20/63 5/29/63	-	-	-	-	-	-	344	16	21.5	344	16	21.5
TOTAL		20,748	498		1,652	54.5		124,014	1,722		446,601	6,869.5	
AVERAGE				41.7			30.3			72.0			65.1

1. Pounds = Pounds of dressed drum landed after capture by set gill nets.

2. Net Days = 300 feet of gill net set for 24 hours.

3. P/ND = Pounds of dressed drum taken per 300 feet of gill net set for 24 hours.

Figure 1
RECORD OF CATCH OF CONTRACT FISHERMEN
for the month of _____ 19__

Contract fishermen are required to fill out the following reports monthly and file with the Parks and Wildlife Department, 1118 Rio Hondo Road, Harlingen, Texas. This report must be received within 10 days after the final entry of the month. Failure to comply will result in the loss of fishing contract.

Date	Area Fished	Head on		Head off		Gear Used	Price paid per lb.		Fish Tags		Actual net hours fishing
		Number	Weight	Number	Weight		Head on	Head off	Tag number	Location taken	
1.						← →					
2.						expanded					
3.						on actual					
4.						form					
5.											
6.											
7.											
8.											
9.											
10.											
11.											
12.											
13.											
14.											
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23.											
24.											
25.											
26.											
27.											
28.											
29.											
30.											
31.											

Signed: _____
Contract Holder
Date: _____

Areas Fished

Area 1--South Bay; All

Area 2--North of the Queen Isabella Causeway, south of ICC Marker # 79 and west of the Intracoastal Canal.

Area 3--North of the Queen Isabella Causeway, south of ICC Marker #79 and east of the Intracoastal Canal.

Area 4--North of ICC Marker #79, south of ICC Marker #39 and west of the Intracoastal Canal.

Area 5--North of ICC Marker #79, south of ICC Marker #39 and east of the Intracoastal Canal.

Area 6--North of ICC Marker #39, south of the Cameron-Willacy County line and west of the Intracoastal Canal.

Area 7--North of ICC Marker #39, south of the Cameron-Willacy County line and east of the Intracoastal Canal.

Area 8--Willacy County; north of the Cameron County line, south of Mansfield Channel and west of the Intracoastal Canal.

Area 9--Willacy County; north of the Cameron County line, south of Mansfield Channel and east of the Intracoastal Canal.

Area 10--Willacy County; north of Mansfield Channel, south of the Kenedy County line and west of the Intracoastal Canal.

Area 11--Willacy County; north of the Port Mansfield Channel, south of the Kenedy County line and east of the Intracoastal Canal.

