



Inland River Herring in Northeast North Carolina



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Introduction

Over the past thirty years, alewife and blueback herring (collectively known as river herring) have declined dramatically within North Carolina's inland waters. River herring have been intensively sought by commercial and recreational fishermen for over two hundred years in North Carolina. Herring dominates the diet of striped bass, one of the most economically important fisheries in Northeast North Carolina. Currently, the recreational fishing regulation on inland river herring (effective until June 30, 2006) allows anglers to possess 25 fish greater than six inches. However, on July 1, 2006 the new North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) harvest regulation on river herring in inland waters will begin, and prevent anglers from possessing river herring greater than six inches in length. The stakeholders that utilize this resource may not understand the need for the new regulation.

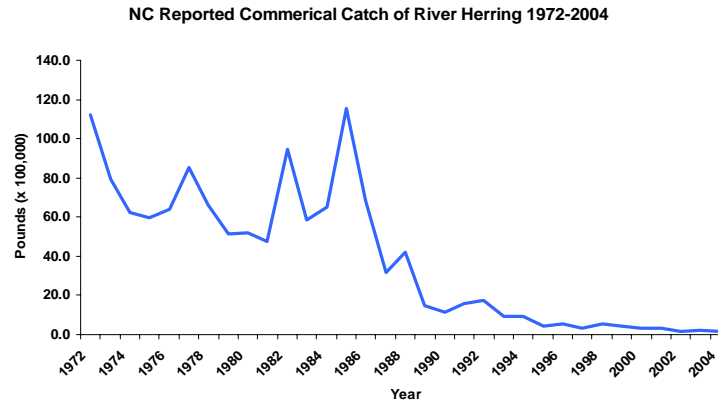
Objective

Our objectives were to evaluate stakeholder knowledge concerning river herring population status, current and new harvest regulations, and educate the public about river herring and the new regulation.

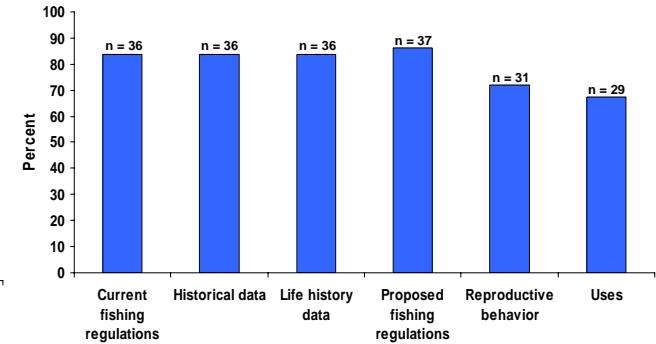
Methods

- We evaluated stakeholder knowledge of river herring issues through a brief survey administered to 22 people that actively utilize river herring, and 47 that do not actively utilize river herring.
- The survey included recreational fishermen, commercial fishermen, natural resources professionals, college students, and the general public.
- We distributed the surveys at the Dixie Deer Classic and through several list serves via an internet survey provider.

Historical Trend



Areas of Further Interest



Results

- The respondents (88%, n=61) believe that river herring populations are declining.
- The majority (74%, n=51) of the citizens surveyed indicated they have poor knowledge of the current and revised river herring harvest regulations.
- Nearly all respondents (82%, n=50) indicated interest in learning more about river herring including fishing regulations, river herring as a resource, and river herring life history traits.

Conclusions

The new regulation is aimed to protect sexually mature river herring within their spawning habitat, the inland coastal waters. The NCWRC inland regulations are an important component in the solution to restore river herring. However, inter-agency cooperation and public education will continue to be critical to conserve this important fishery in North Carolina.

Acknowledgements

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Perceived Length of Moratorium Needed

