

RIVER HERRING (BLUEBACK HERRING AND ALEWIFE)

(06/03 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status—*Overfished* Albemarle Sound Area- Number of year classes represented in the harvest are reduced, poor juvenile production, and decrease in the mean size at age; *Unknown* for other areas of the state

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1993-2002—465,822 lb, \$ 125,907

2002 Commercial Landings and Value—174,860 lb, \$ 65,723

Average Recreational Landings 1993-2002 and 2002—Unknown

Status of Fisheries Management Plan— ASMFC Fishery Management Plan for American Shad and River Herrings approved 1985, Amendment #1 of this plan was approved October 1998, DMF has completed the Albemarle Sound Area River Herring FMP. MFC approved the FMP February 2000. The FMP is up for review 2003-2004.

Research and Data Needs—Re-evaluation of spawning areas, evaluate the survival of larvae to juvenile, expand juvenile sampling, determine population size in the various systems, develop mortality estimates, expand the river herring study to include all of Albemarle Sound and its tributaries.

Current Minimum Size Limit— None

Harvest Season—Currently no season, annual commercial quota (calendar year) for river herring in the Albemarle Sound Herring Management Area 300,000 lb, allocated to pound net, gill net and other fisheries (quota by gear). Recreational limits for river herring are 25 (in the aggregate), per person, per day.

Size and Age at Maturity— 8-10 inches, Males- 2-4 years old, Females- 4-5 years old

Historical and Current Maximum Age— 9 years old, 7 years old

Juvenile Abundance Indices Average 1972-2002 and 2002— Blueback Herring (unvalidated) 63.4, 2002- .78 (number of individuals per unit of effort), Alewife (unvalidated) 2.3, 2002- .13

Habits/Habitats— Blueback herring and alewife are anadromous (spending majority of life in the ocean, returning to fresh water to spawn) species. Spawning occurs from March into May in coastal rivers and tributaries. Juveniles spend their first growing season in fresh to brackish waters and migrate to more saline waters as the water temperatures decrease in the fall. Some may spend their first winter in the sounds, but the majority migrate to the ocean and remain there until sexual maturity. Albemarle Sound area is the center of the commercial and recreational fisheries for river herring.

For more information, see [DMF Species Leads page](#)