

RIVER HERRING (BLUEBACK HERRING AND ALEWIFE)

(06/04 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. Chowan River pound net harvest allocation (200,000 lb) has not been reached since 2001. *Unknown* for other areas of the state.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1994-2003- 394,170 lbs., \$128,043

2003 Commercial Landings and Value- 199,716 lbs., \$88,862

Average RCGL Landings 2002-2003- 25,351 lbs. **2003**- 27,906 lbs.

Status of Fishery Management Plan- The ASMFC Fishery Management Plan for American Shad and River Herring was approved in 1985. Amendment #1 of this plan was approved October 1998. The MFC approved the Albemarle Sound Area River Herring FMP in February of 2000. The FMP is up for review 2004-2005.

Data/Research Needs- Re-evaluation of spawning areas, evaluate the survival of larvae to juvenile, evaluate the effect of striped bass as predators on juvenile alosids, 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 Regulations- None

Harvest Season-Currently no set season. The river herring commercial harvest in the Albemarle Sound Herring Management Area is managed on a quota system with a yearly TAC (total allowable catch) of 300,000 lb. The quota is allocated by gear; Chowan River pound nets 200,000 lb, gill nets 67,000 lb, and other gear (which includes gear **other** than Chowan River pound nets, and gill nets) 33,000 lb. Recreational limits for river herring are 25 (in the aggregate), per person, per day.

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

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

Juvenile Abundance Index Average (number of individuals per unit of effort) **1972-2003 and 2003--** Blueback herring (unvalidated) 61.4, 2003- 1.3, Alewife (unvalidated) 2.3, 2003- 1.5

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](#)