

RIVER HERRING (BLUEBACK HERRING AND ALEWIFE)

(06/07 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - Albemarle Sound Area - *Depleted* - The most recent stock assessment completed in May 2005 outlines increased mortality rates, decreased recruitment and reduced spawning stock biomass as key indicators of continued decline in the river herring stock in the Albemarle Sound area. The number of year classes represented in the harvest are reduced, juvenile production remains low, and mean length at age continues to decline. The North Carolina River Herring Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) has been updated and is scheduled for final adoption by the Marine Fisheries Commission in June 2007.

Other areas of the state - ***Unknown***

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1997-2006 – 286,171 lbs./\$120,545

2006 Commercial Landings and Value – 109,243 lbs./\$83,812 (quota-managed)

Average Recreational Landings 1997-2006 – unknown, **2006** - unknown

Average Recreational Commercial Gear Landings 2002-2006 – 14,794 lbs., **2006** – 3,808 lbs.

Average Number of Citations 1997-2006 – N/A, **2006** - N/A

Status of Fishery Management Plan (FMP) - The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) FMP for Shad and River Herring was approved in 1985 and Amendment 1 was approved October 1998. The Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) approved the first Albemarle Sound Area River Herring FMP in February 2000. The FMP has been revised (as The North Carolina FMP for River Herring, Amendment One) and is scheduled for final adoption by the MFC in June 2007.

Research and Data Needs - Re-evaluate spawning areas, evaluate the survival of larvae to juvenile, further evaluate the effects of habitat loss on the river herring stock and provide protection for these habitat areas, evaluate the effect of striped bass as predators on juvenile alosines, expand juvenile sampling, determine population size in the various systems, expand the river herring study to include all of Albemarle Sound and its tributaries, and other areas of the state.

Current Regulations (2007) – The MFC, through the 2007 Draft North Carolina River Herring FMP Amendment 1, implemented a no harvest (commercial or recreational) provision for the joint and coastal waters of the state, with up to 7,500 pounds set aside for research at the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Director's discretion. The Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) has also implemented a no harvest provision for all inland waters of the state for river herring greater than 6 inches.

Size and Age at Maturity – Males: 6-10 inches fork length (FL)/2-4 years, Females: 6-10 inches FL/3-5 years

Historical and Current Maximum Age - 9 years/7 years

Juvenile Abundance Index 1997-2006 - blueback herring 3.9, alewife .94, **2006** - blueback herring .51, alewife 0

Habits and Habitats - Blueback herring and alewife are anadromous, spending majority of life in the ocean, returning to fresh water to spawn. 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. The Albemarle Sound was historically the center of the commercial and recreational fisheries for river herring.

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