

Migratory Fish



Fish ladder on the Lamprey River, Newmarket, NH. Photo by PREP

How have migratory fish returns to the Piscataqua Region changed over time?

Migratory river herring returns to the Great Bay Estuary generally increased during the 1970-1992 period, remained relatively stable in 1993-2004, and then decreased in recent years.

EXPLANATION Major rivers of the Piscataqua Region historically had very large populations of migratory fish including Atlantic salmon, river herring, American shad, and American eels. Today, only river herring and American eels still return regularly in substantial numbers to the rivers and are the focus of current migratory fish restoration efforts.

River herring returns to the major rivers of the Great Bay Estuary have been combined in Figure 14.1. This figure illustrates that river herring returns to the Great Bay estuary generally increased during the 1970-1992 period, remained relatively

stable 1993-2004, then decreased in recent years. This decline is likely due to a combination of losses while the herring are in the sea-going portions of their lifecycle, limited freshwater habi-

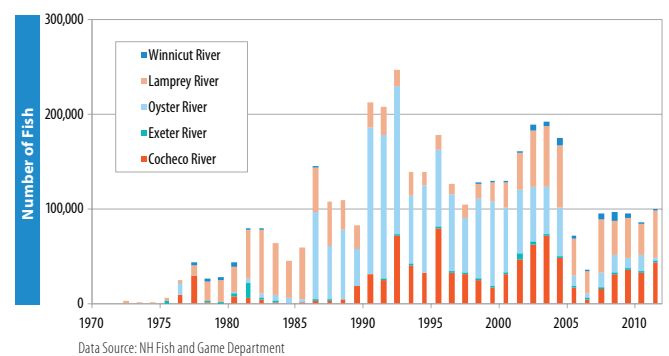
tat quantity/quality, difficulty getting up fish ladders that are installed over dams, safe downstream passage over dams, possible over-fishing in some river systems, water pollution, and flood events during upstream migrations. The Taylor River, in Hampton-Seabrook Harbor, has had the highest recorded returns of herring (Figure 14.2). However, this population has declined dramatically. The decline is most likely due to poor water quality in the Taylor River reservoir upstream of the dam.

Why This Matters

River herring are migratory fish, which means they travel from the ocean upstream to freshwater streams, marshes, and ponds to reproduce. Herring are eaten by other species and therefore sustain important commercial and recreational fisheries and other wildlife.

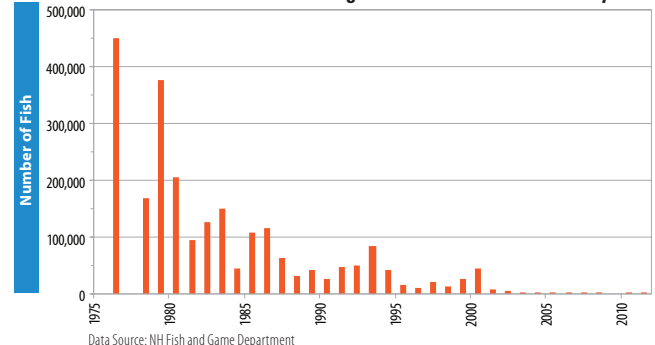
PREP GOAL No goal.

FIGURE 14.1 Returns of river herring to fish ladders in the Great Bay Estuary



Data Source: NH Fish and Game Department

FIGURE 14.2 Returns of river herring to the fish ladder on the Taylor River



Data Source: NH Fish and Game Department