

Last Call for River Herring

By Peter Himchak, Supervising Fisheries Biologist

Recreational anglers have long enjoyed the accessibility and privilege of catching their own bait in pursuit of their fishing activity. Whether it is mullet, eel, silversides, killifish, grass and sand shrimp or river herring, an angler in New Jersey has been afforded the opportunity to gather his or her own bait by using a dip net, beach seine, cast net, lift or umbrella net, shrimp trawl, killipot and even angling. There are gear and seasonal restrictions and harvest limits on some bait fisheries, but an ample supply of the desired bait was usually available—until now. Recreational anglers will no longer be allowed to catch their own river herring bait, nor will commercial fisheries be permitted, when a moratorium is placed on taking river herring in New Jersey, effective January 1, 2012.

How did this come about? River herring, including both blueback herring and alewives, are anadromous fish which live most of their adult lives in the ocean and return in the springtime to natal rivers and streams to spawn. Recreational anglers await this annual spring migration when sufficient herring numbers are concentrated migrating toward spawning areas. Here they are readily available to be taken as prized bait, usually destined to become live bait in the striped bass recreational fishery.

River herring have endured a barrage of abuses over time, including habitat loss either due to dam construction and insufficient (or a total lack of) fish passage opportunities to their spawning grounds; habitat and water quality degradation in critical spawning and nursery habitat; overfishing; significant by-catch/discard mortality in other commercial fisheries and also predation. The river herring resource along the Atlantic coast has been in precipitous decline since the 1950s. Very few of the vibrant, sustained spawning runs from years ago remain today.

How do we restore river herring stocks?

While preemptive management actions were taken by several states including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and North Carolina—as well as those shared waters along the common border of Virginia and North Carolina—to implement moratoriums on river herring fisheries in recent years, continued declines in river herring stocks were still observed. More aggressive action was necessary.

Thus, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), a compact of all 15 Atlantic coastal states, implemented Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Shad and River Herring in May 2009. The plan requires states to submit for approval sustainable fishery plans demonstrating the sustainability of

river herring runs in order for direct or by-catch fisheries on river herring to continue in state waters or else a moratorium on the harvest of all river herring fisheries in state waters will be imposed effective January 1, 2012. New Jersey does not have sufficient data to develop and submit a sustainable fishery plan for any run of river herring and hence must implement such a moratorium.

Two major actions are being taken by the National Marine Fisheries Service to monitor and mitigate for losses of river herring in commercial fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone, the federally managed marine waters from 3–200 nautical miles offshore. Through the New England Fishery Management Council, Amendment 5 to Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring is being developed to document levels of harvest and to mitigate by-catch losses through area or seasonal closures. This high degree of monitoring by-catch/discard mortality will require extensive at-sea observer coverage and portside sampling to assess fishing mortality impacts on river herring stocks.

Additionally, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council is developing Amendment 14 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid and Butterfish Fisheries, to monitor by-catch/discard mortality of river

herring in these offshore fisheries and to develop mitigating strategies to minimize fishing-related mortality for river herring.

The demise of most river herring stocks did not occur overnight, just as their recovery to a restored status will be no quick fix. In addition to the moratoriums, other issues such as monitoring and mitigation of fishery management strategies, critical spawning and nursery habitat issues also must be addressed. River herring habitat improvement projects are needed.

Dam removal programs are essential to restore river herring spawning habitat. Where dams cannot be removed, the installation of fish ladders or passageways must be considered to “lift” river herring over these physical impediments, allowing the fish access to historical spawning habitat.

Unfortunately, river herring have not been a high priority fishery to receive dedicated research and management funds. To restore this fishery, that approach must change. Regrettably, when January 1, 2012 arrives and the river herring harvest moratorium goes into effect, anglers will no longer have access to these formerly abundant baitfish. The ramifications of their decline reaches far beyond a day fishing with family or friends.



Completed Fish Ladder, Great Egg Harbor, Lenape Lake—

Water flows from the lake into the modified former ice passage behind the power house whose foundation is seen on the far side of the ladder structure. The fish ladder makes several turns before exiting parallel to the river's flow. Internal wood baffles provide resting areas for fish that must work upstream against both gravity and the river's flow.

Photo credit: Fred Akers, Great Egg Harbor River Council

Skillful Angler Awards Program



James Laco can be proud of this substantial fluke.

The Skillful Angler Awards Program is designed to supplement the New Jersey Record Fish Program. It is comprised of three categories: Adult (for anglers age 16 and older), Junior (under age 16) and Catch and Release (based on length). A clear, side-view photo that allows accurate species identification must be included with each application. All photo entries become property of the Division of Fish and Wildlife and will not be returned. Well-composed, high resolution photos may be selected for printing in future *Digests*.

The Skillful Angler Awards program acknowledges that many anglers catch freshwater and marine fish that are not record size, but are still worthy of recognition because the size and weight of the fish sufficiently tested the angler's skill. The program is open to resident and non-resident anglers. All fish must be caught in New Jersey waters using a hook and line during legally open seasons.

Anglers qualifying for a Skillful Angler award receive a certificate and a bronze pin to adorn their fishing hat or jacket. Only one pin and certificate per species—regardless of category—will be awarded annually to each participant, but an angler may submit applications for larger fish caught even after receiving a pin.

At the end of the year, special recognition is given to anglers who catch the largest fish in each species category. The winner of each category receives a special commemorative gift recognizing his or her accomplishment as the best of New Jersey's Skillful Anglers.

Fish must be measured from the tip of the nose (with mouth closed) to the tip of the tail. For Adult/Junior categories, fish must be weighed and measured by fishing license agents, tackle shops or authorized Fish and Wildlife fisheries biologists.

Learn more online at NJFishandWildlife.com/skflang.htm.

Minimum Entry Requirements:

Species	Adult Weight (lbs., oz.)	Junior Weight (lbs., oz.)	Catch & Release (inches)
Black Sea Bass	4	3	20
Striped Bass	40	36	42
Black Drum	70	63	46
Bluefish	18	16	33
Cod	30	27	42
Dolphin	30	27	n/a
Winter Flounder	2	1 lb., 8 oz.	16
Fluke	8	7	27
Kingfish	1	8 oz.	13
Mako Shark	250	225	n/a
Blue Marlin	400	360	n/a
White Marlin	60	54	n/a
Pollock	25	22 lbs., 8 oz.	41
Tautog	8	7	22
Albacore Tuna	50	45	n/a
Big Eye Tuna	200	180	n/a
Bluefin Tuna	500	450	n/a
Yellowfin Tuna	120	108	n/a
Tuna (other)	250	225	n/a
Weakfish	10	9	30

The New Jersey State Record Fish Program requires a separate application and is based on weight alone. Scale certification documentation and a weighmaster's signature are necessary. Other rules apply. Visit Fish and Wildlife's Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com for a complete list of current state records. See also page 25.

New Jersey Skillful Angler Application

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Telephone Number (_____) _____

Entry Category (check only one):

Adult Junior (16 years and under)

Catch and Release (qualification based on length)

Fish Species (Angler must complete. Subject to verification by a state biologist.)

Weight _____ lb(s), _____ oz. Length _____ in. Girth _____ in.

Date Caught* _____ / _____ / _____ Time _____

Location _____

Caught from (check only one):

Boat Shore Surf Jetty

Other (specify) _____

Line Test Used _____ Reel Type _____

Rod Type _____ Lure/Bait _____

Certification for Adult and Junior Categories

Name of Establishment _____
(where fish was measured and weighed)

Telephone Number _____

Weighmaster's Name _____

Weighmaster's Signature _____

I certify: 1) this fish was caught in New Jersey waters in accordance with state laws and regulations; 2) the entry was weighed on a certified scale (for Adult and Junior categories only).

I have enclosed a clear, side-view photo.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

* Application and photo must be submitted **within 30 days** of catching the fish. Applications for fish caught in December will be accepted only until January 31.

Mail to:

NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife
Skillful Angler Awards Program
Pequest Natural Resource Education Center
605 Pequest Rd.
Oxford, NJ 07863

New Jersey State Record Marine Sport Fish

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Record Fish Program honors anglers who catch the largest of select species of freshwater and saltwater fish. Record size is based on weight alone; there are no line classes. Currently there are 61 marine species eligible for entry into the program.

Anglers are reminded that the objective of the Record Fish Program is to increase awareness of fishing opportunities for species that are regularly sought and routinely found on or off the coast of New Jersey. The original list of 72 species was pared down with that objective in mind.

Eleven species are now retired from the list of program-eligible fish, but remain on a separate list posted on Fish and Wildlife's Web site. One historical catch is also retired and posted on the list.

Anglers should be aware of the procedure in effect for entering the Record Fish Program. First, separate applications are required for freshwater and saltwater species. Second, for saltwater entries, it is now mandatory that a marine biologist inspect any potential record fish, as identification solely by photo is not always accurate. Anglers must call Fish and Wildlife's Nacote Creek Research Station at (609) 748-2020 to make arrangements for inspection. In most instances, the fish must be transported to this office in Port Republic. However, in the case of extremely large fish (i.e., shark and tuna), a biologist should be available to travel for dockside inspection. Note that all scale certification requirements still apply, including a valid Certificate of Inspection/Test Report and current Registration Certificate issued by the County Office of Weights and Measures.

The entry deadline is now no later than one month after the date of catch. Note that the triggerfish category is now defined as gray triggerfish.

For a complete list of state record fish or to print an application with complete program rules, visit the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com/fishing.htm.



Fishing off of Cape May, this new state record black sea bass taken by Andrew Merendino weighed 8 lbs., 4.5 oz.

New Jersey State Record Marine Fish

Species	Lbs.	Oz.	Year	Angler	Where Caught
Amberjack, greater	85	0	1993	Edwin Metzner	Off Cape May
Bass, black sea	8	4.5	2010	Andrew A. Merendino	Off Cape May
Bluefish	27	1	1997	Roger Kastorsky	5 Fathom Bank
Bonito, Atlantic	13	8	1945	Frank Lykes, Jr.	Off Sandy Hook
Cobia	87	0	1999	John Shanchuk	Off Sea Bright
Cod	81	0	1967	Joseph Chesla	Off Brielle
Crab, blue	8 ^{3/4} " pt. to pt.		2009	Raymond Ponik	Bayonne
Croaker, Atlantic	5	8	1981	Frederick Brown	Delaware Bay
*Cunner	2	9	2006	Nick Honachefsky	Mud Hole
Dogfish, smooth	19	9	2010	Richard A. Proot, III	Mantoloking
Dogfish, spiny	15	12	1990	Jeff Pennick	Off Cape May
Dolphin	63	3	1974	Scott Smith, Jr.	Baltimore Canyon
Drum, black	109	0	2008	Nick Henry	Delaware Bay
Drum, red	55	0	1985	Daniel Yanino	Great Bay
Eel, American	9	13	1988	Warren Campbell	Atlantic City
Fluke	19	12	1953	Walter Lubin	Off Cape May
Flounder, winter	5	11	1993	Jimmy Swanson	Off Barnegat Light
Hake, white	41	7	1989	Wayne Eble	Off Barnegat Light

Species	Lbs.	Oz.	Year	Angler	Where Caught
Kingfish, Northern	2	8	2004	Chester Urbanski	Barnegat Bay
Ling (red hake)	12	13	2010	Billy Watson	Off Manasquan
Mackerel, Atlantic	4	1	1983	Abe Elkin	Manasquan Ridge
Mackerel, king	54	0	1998	Fernando Alfaiate	Off Cape May
*Mackerel, Spanish	9	12	1990	Donald Kohler	Off Cape May
Marlin, blue	1,046	0	1986	Phil Infantolino	Hudson Canyon
Marlin, white	137	8	1980	Mike Marchell	Hudson Canyon
Perch, white	2	12	1998	Michael King	Little Beach Creek
*Pollock	46	7	1975	John Holton	Off Brielle
Porgy	5	14	1976	Victor Rone	Delaware Bay
Sailfish	43	4	2006	Dr. John Tallia	Linden Kohl Canyon
Seatrout, spotted	11	2	1974	Bert Harper	Holgate Surf
Shad, American	7	0	1967	Rodger West	Great Bay
Shad, hickory				Vacant (Minimum Weight 2 lbs.)	
Shark, blue	366	0	1996	William Young, Jr.	Mud Hole
Shark, bull				Vacant (Minimum Weight 150 lbs.)	
Shark, dusky	530	0	1987	Brian Dunlevy	Off Great Egg Inlet
Shark, hammer-head	365	0	1985	Walter Thacara	Mud Hole
Shark, porbeagle				Vacant (Minimum Weight 100 lbs.)	
Shark, sandbar	168	8	1987	John Norton	Little Egg Inlet
Shark, s-fin mako	856	0	1994	Christopher Palmer	Wilmington Canyon
Shark, thresher	683	0	2009	Bennett Fogelberg	Fingers
Shark, tiger	880	0	1988	Billy DeJohn	Off Cape May
Sheepshead	17	3	2003	Paul Lowe	Manahawkin Bay
Spadefish	11	6	1998	Cliff Low	Delaware Bay
Spearfish, longbill	42	0	1989	George Algard	Poor Man's Canyon
	42	0	1997	Joseph Natoli	Hudson Canyon
Spot	0	13	2003	Robert Belsky, Jr.	Little Sheepshead Creek
*Striped Bass	78	8	1982	Al McReynolds	Atlantic City
Swordfish	530	0	1964	Edmund Levitt	Wilmington Canyon
*Tautog	25	0	1998	Anthony Monica	Off Ocean City
Tilefish, golden	63	8	2009	Dennis Muhlenforth	Linden Kohl Canyon
Tilefish, gray	18	7	2007	Joseph Sanzone	Tom's Canyon
Triggerfish, gray	5	12	2008	Ronald Pires	High Bar Harbor
Tuna, albacore	77	15	1984	Dr. S. Scannapiego	Spencer Canyon
Tuna, big-eye	364	14	1984	George Krenick	Hudson Canyon
Tuna, bluefin	1,030	6	1981	Royal Parsons	Off Pt. Pleasant
Tuna, skipjack	13	4	1999	Craig Eberbach	Wilmington Canyon
Tuna, yellowfin	290	0	1980	Wayne Brinkerhoff	Hudson Canyon
Tunny, little	24	15	1977	Mark Niemczyk	Off Sea Bright
Wahoo	123	12	1992	Robert Carr	28-Mile Wreck
Weakfish	18	8	1986	Karl Jones	Delaware Bay
Whiting (silver hake)				Vacant (Minimum Weight 2.5 lbs.)	

* Fish was previously certified by the IGFA as a world record.

For information concerning the New Jersey State Record Fish or Skillful Angler programs, visit the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com.

Honoring the Life of Don Byrne

By Bill Figley, Principal Biologist (Retired)
New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife



New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife mourns the loss of an outstanding fisheries biologist. Don Byrne, born October 26, 1949 in Teaneck, New Jersey died suddenly of a heart attack on June 28, 2010 at his home in Port Republic.

Don loved the outdoors. Most of his life was spent enjoying nature, in general, and studying marine fish, in particular.

He graduated from the University of Virginia with a B.A. degree in biology, then attained an M.S. degree in Marine Science from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. His professional career began in 1976 with Ichthyological Associates, an environmental consulting firm. In 1980, he came to work for the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife where he spent the next 30 years as a marine fisheries biologist based at the Nacote Creek Research Station, located near the mouth of the Mullica River.

Don's primary job with the Bureau of Marine Fisheries was, as he put it, "to count the fishes in the sea" which he accomplished through the Ocean Stock Assessment Program. This survey employed a commercial trawler to drag a large net across the sea floor at numerous predetermined locations collecting samples of most of the fish species found

along the Jersey coast. This intensive survey was conducted five times each year. By analyzing each catch, Don could determine population trends in our local fish stocks. Such information is essential to manage fisheries important to both recreational and commercial fishermen.



Running the trawl survey involved more than just knowing how to handle nets and identify fish; it also required one of Don's greatest skills—the ability to get along well with people.

With a limited professional staff, he had to rely upon dozens of volunteers to get the job done. Workers and volunteers often described his work ethic and excellent relationship with the crew as both serious and humorous, exacting, demanding yet forgiving, precise but practical, hard working and caring. Many volunteers returned for trawl survey, cruise after cruise—proof of Don's engaging spirit.

Don's other Fish and Wildlife responsibilities included reviewing environmental impacts of coastal development projects, documenting state streams that support herring spawning runs and representing New Jersey in the coastal management of lobster.

His passion for marine science was also evident in the volunteer hours he spent with local area students who shared his enthusiasm. Whether being a mentor to science fair students or exciting them through hands-on interactions using local fish species, Don was never too busy to help a possible future marine biologist.

Outdoor pursuits extended beyond his professional career. Don loved flower and vegetable gardening, preferring a shovel over faster methods. Family vacations included kayaking, hiking and camping in national parks and beachcombing the Outer Banks of North Carolina. He regularly played league volleyball and rode his bike to work daily.

Don was married to his wife Becky, a grade school teacher, for 39 years. His two daughters inherited their father's love of nature and both currently work for Fish and Wildlife. Daughter Karen Leskie is the Aquatic Education Coordinator with the Office of Information and Education whose husband, Joe Leskie, is the Bureau of Wildlife Management's southern region Deer Research Project biologist. Daughter Nancy Byrne is a clerical worker with the Bureau of Marine Fisheries and is studying for her master's degree in library science.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife and the many volunteers, friends and family will surely miss this beloved fisheries biologist.



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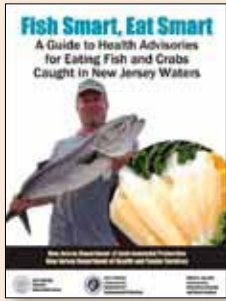
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Fish Smart, Eat Smart

Eating Fish And Crabs Caught In New Jersey Waters

Fishing provides enjoyable and relaxing recreation. Fish are an excellent source of protein and other nutrients and play a role in maintaining a healthy, well-balanced diet. Many anglers enjoy cooking and eating their own catch. However,

elevated levels of potentially harmful chemical contaminants such as dioxin, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides and mercury have been found in certain fish and crabs in some New Jersey waters. Fish consumption advisories have been adopted to guide citizens on safe consumption practices.

The current list of fish consumption advisories consists of state-wide, regional and water body-specific warnings for a variety of fish species and fish consumers. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Health and Senior Services have prepared literature and a new Web site to help you make informed choices about which fish to eat and how to reduce your exposure to these harmful chemicals.

**Check online for fish consumption advisories on the local water body in which you fish!
Go to FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org**

To reduce exposure to harmful chemical contaminants when preparing and eating the fish species taken from the identified waters, it is essential to follow the guidelines provided. The DEP encourages you to consult the Fish Smart-Eat Smart Fish Advisory Guide or www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org when making decisions about eating recreationally caught fish and crabs.

The Fish Smart-Eat Smart Advisory Guide includes contaminant information, advisory charts, plus preparation and cooking methods to reduce contaminant levels, as well as specific guidelines, advice and prohibitions for people at high risk, such as children, pregnant women and women of child-bearing age. The Guide also includes Web site links to Pennsylvania, Delaware and New York for information about fish consumption advisories for shared waters.

For a complete list of state and federal marine fish consumption advisories visit: FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org.

The fish consumption advisories and Fish Smart-Eat Smart Web site are updated periodically and are available online or from the Office of Science at (609) 984-6070 and through the Department of Health and Senior Services at (609) 826-4935.

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- Circle of Life – Serving central Barnegat Bay/Tices Shoal
- Bay Sweeper – Serving southern Barnegat Bay/Little Egg Harbor Bay
- Waste Watcher – Serving Little Egg Harbor area



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Contact pumpout boats on VHF Channel 9 to arrange for a FREE pumpout.

For more information visit NJFishandWildlife.com/cvahome.htm

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MRIP is changing the way managers, scientists and anglers are working together to ensure the sustainability of saltwater fishing.



What is MRIP?

The Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, is the new way the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries) is counting and reporting key aspects of recreational fishing activity: it factors in the catch—or the tally of the number, size and species of fish being caught, plus the effort—another way of saying how many people are fishing, when and how often. Launched in 2008, MRIP has been designed from the ground up as a comprehensive overhaul of NOAA Fisheries' previous estimation methods.

It will not only produce better estimates of fishing activity—and ultimately, the health of fish stocks—but will accomplish this through a process grounded in the principles of transparency, accountability and engagement.

MRIP is designed to meet two critical needs. The first is to provide the detailed, timely and scientifically sound estimates upon which fisheries managers, stock assessors and marine scientists can rely to ensure the sustainability of ocean resources.

Equally important, MRIP will address head-on stakeholder concerns

MRIP will not be a fisheries management “silver bullet”; it is the commitment to a process in which end users' needs are a top consideration.

about the reliability and credibility of recreational fishing catch and effort estimates.

MRIP explicitly recognizes that the numbers we produce do not exist in a vacuum; they have real impacts on the lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans.

How will MRIP benefit anglers?

MRIP will benefit anyone concerned about the sustainability of our ocean resources. It will provide better data by addressing potential biases in past methods, and by adapting to meet emerging science and management needs.

It's very important to understand that MRIP may not have a significant impact on current estimates of fishing regulations. But it will be the basis for a collaborative process for evaluating what the numbers tell us and how we should respond.

In the end, the better the information we have, the better the decisions we can make about how best to conserve our oceans and ensure their sustainable use.

Where can I learn more?

To learn more about MRIP at the national level, visit www.countmyfish.noaa.gov. To learn more about what it means to you as an angler, get involved! Go to council meetings, become active with your fishing club, and check back with the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife throughout the fishing season.

MRIP Quick Facts

2011 marks the second year of the National Saltwater Angler Registry. Find out if **YOU** need to register for the federal program. (At the time this *Digest* was published, the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP) had not yet been completed and approved by NMFS; see page 14 for details. The NJDEP is working to have the free NJSRRP available for individuals and for-hire vessels to register sometime in May. Anglers and for-hire vessels will register through the NJDEP Web site.)

You **MUST** register if you:

- » Fish in federal waters, or
- » Target or catch anadromous species (saltwater fish that spawn in freshwater like river herring, shad or striped bass) in any tidal waters, and
- » Do not meet any of the exemptions under the law.

You are **EXEMPT** if you:

- » Are under 16, or
- » Only fish on federally permitted charter, party or guide boats, or
- » Hold a Highly Migratory Species Angling permit, or
- » Are fishing commercially under a valid license, or
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