

DNREC : News : Delaware's river herring harvest closed due to population decline

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Delaware's river herring harvest closed due to population decline

DOVER (March 28, 2012) – The DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife reminds recreational anglers and commercial watermen that it is now unlawful in Delaware to harvest or possess river herring, a popular baitfish, without a valid receipt from a state or jurisdiction where harvest is permitted.

New state Fisheries regulations took effect on Feb. 11, closing the recreational and commercial harvest of river herring (also known as blueback and alewife herring). The closure was made to bring Delaware into compliance with Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) requirements.

“Unless an ASMFC member state could prove that a given river herring run could withstand harvest, the commission opted to close the fishery in response to serious declines in river herring populations, including a commercial decline to very low levels coastwide. “In 2011, Delaware commercial fishermen reported catching only 300 pounds of river herring, the lowest amount since mandatory reporting began in 1985,” said Fisheries program manager and biologist Stewart Michels. “We lack evidence to suggest that current harvest levels are sustainable, so closure of the fishery was required.”

Much of the commercial river herring catch in Delaware traditionally has come from the Nanticoke River and its tributaries. The Maryland portion of the Nanticoke River will be closed to recreational and commercial fishing as part of a statewide river herring closure planned for the State of Maryland. New Jersey has closed its river herring fisheries in the Delaware River and Bay.

In the past, recreational anglers have targeted river herring as the fish gather to spawn in the spring. Much of the recent recreational harvest in Delaware has been for use as bait in the striped bass hook and line fishery. With Delaware's river herring fisheries closed, recreational anglers are no longer permitted to catch river herring and will need to use an alternate type of live bait.

Delaware's state regulations on river herring were amended following public hearings and consideration of public input. Signs giving notice of the fisheries closure are in the process of being posted at various fishing locations.

For more information, click on the amended [river herring](#) regulations.

With fish entering the spillways early this year due to the warm weather, anglers are also reminded that using

any type of net to catch fish within 300 feet below a dam or spillway is illegal, with the exception of using a landing net on a fish caught with hook and line.

For more information on fishing in Delaware, please visit www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/Fisheries/.

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