

Coast-wide Phone Survey of Alewife and Blueback Herring Harvesters

Interview script

My name is Julia. I'm calling on behalf of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration —often referred to as NOAA. We are conducting a survey of current and past alewife and blueback herring harvesters to gather information about observations made while fishing. I'm calling because we have identified you as someone who has fished for alewives or bluebacks. Is this correct?

Great! If you are willing, I would like to do a short interview over the phone with you. I'll tell you more about it before you decide if you want to participate or not.

[For people from Maine: I know that Karen Hutchins Bieluch and the Alewife Harvesters of Maine did some interviews last year. Did you participate in that? This survey is similar in some ways, but different in scope and intent so I hope you'll bear with me and let me ask you some of the same questions.]

We are doing this survey because we want to get a better idea of how alewife and blueback populations are doing along the east coast. We need your help with that. You, as a harvester, have detailed knowledge about the fish in your local rivers. We are reaching out to harvesters like you from Maine to North Carolina with the goal of documenting your observations of the fish in your local areas. We want to use this information to make better-informed management decisions in the future and to help us identify opportunities for restoration and research needs.

Does this survey sound like something you would be interested in participating in?

That's great! The survey should only take about 15 minutes. Do you have time to do it now or would you like me to call you back at another time?

(Schedule a time if necessary)

I would like to record this interview if that's okay with you. It's not necessary, but recording it is the best way for me to make sure that I accurately document your responses. Is it alright with you if I record this interview?

(If yes) Okay, I'm going to start recording.

(If no) Okay, I'll just take notes.

There's just one more thing that I want you to know about before we begin. When we report on the results of this survey - and I will send you copy of the final report - we will combine everyone's answers into summaries. We won't report your individual responses unless you

have a really great quote. We do not plan to share your individual responses with people outside of NOAA, but under the Freedom of Information Act, anyone can request information from us because we are a government agency. That's something I want you to be aware of before you agree to participate in this interview. You can always decline to answer a question if it makes you uncomfortable. "I don't know" is also an acceptable answer to any of the questions.

Is that all okay with you?

Question list

- 1) When it comes to alewives and bluebacks, would you describe yourself as a commercial harvester, a recreational harvester, a personal use harvester, or something else?
- 2) Did you fish for alewives or bluebacks this year?
 - a. If no, when did you last fish for them?
- 3) For how many years did/have you fished for alewives and/or bluebacks?
- 4) Did you fish for them consistently every year?
- 5) Have you fished for them in any states other than [STATE NAME]?
 - a. If yes, which states?
 - b. If yes, in which state did most of your alewife and/or blueback fishing effort take place?
- 6) Do/did you fish for them in multiple locations?
- 7) What type of habitat do/did you fish for them in?
- 8) What type of gear do/did you use?
 - a. If multiple types of gear, which is/was your primary?
- 9) Do/did you make any effort to identify the fish you catch as either alewives or bluebacks?
 - a. If yes, how do you tell the difference?
 - b. If yes, do you tend to catch more of one than of the other?

When answering the following few questions, please answer based on your own personal observations rather than what you may know from outside sources

- 10) Based on your observations made while alewife and/or blueback fishing, at what time of year do they usually show up in your area?
- 11) When does the run usually end?
- 12) Over the years that you fished for alewives and/or bluebacks, did you notice any changes in the timing of when the fish were in your area?
 - a. If yes, please describe.
- 13) When fishing for alewives and/or bluebacks, did you notice any changes in their overall abundance?
 - a. If yes, please describe.
 - b. If yes, did you notice any changes in the abundance of alewives relative to bluebacks?
- 14) When fishing for alewives and/or bluebacks, did you notice any changes in the size of the individual fish?

- a. If yes, please describe.
- 15) Based on your observations while fishing, how would you describe the current status of alewife and blueback populations in your area?
 - 16) What do you think are the biggest threats to these species, if any?
 - 17) What do you think is the best way to address those threats?
 - 18) Your answer to this question might be the same as the last question, and that's okay. In your opinion, what do you think is the most important thing that we could do to help these populations grow and maintain themselves at a sustainable level?
 - 19) Is there anything else that you think is important for us to know about?
 - 20) Do you know of any groups or organizations in your area that I should contact to help find other fishermen to call as part of this survey?
 - 21) Would you like to receive a report on the results of this survey either by email or by regular mail?

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other suggestions for reducing this burden to Dan Kircheis, Protected Resources Division, Maine Field Station, 17 Godfrey Drive, Orono, Maine 04473 or dan.kircheis@noaa.gov.

The survey results are intended for internal use by NMFS to better understand biological trends within river herring populations, and the survey information will be kept separate from the respondents name and contact information. However, there are no assurances of confidentiality, and this will be explained to each interviewee prior to the interview being conducted, and will be part of the interview script. Notwithstanding any other provisions of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subjected to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.