

- **Fish Friendly Piers** - Piers represent sources of structure and cover for reservoir fish populations. The importance of these structures appears to be increasing as some reservoirs experience rapid development and 'cleansing' of the shoreline. We have formed partnerships with NCWRC, NC Wildlife Habitat Foundation, Bass Pro Shops, Pure Fishing, NC BASS Federation, NC State University, USGS, and B.A.S.S. Inc. to promote the development or retrofitting of fish friendly piers. These are piers with added structure (e.g., Berkeley Fish Habs or brush) beneath the pier to provide cover. Contact Hugh Barwick for more details (704) 875-5459.
- **Fish Health Assessments** - Fish health assessments were conducted throughout the Catawba River in October 2000. A few locations with elevated scores were seen for the first time and a few of the chronically more problematic locations appear to be cleaning up (i.e., fish health scores dropped somewhat). Overall, fish health scores in 2000 appear to be lower than in past years.

We have noticed fish in past surveys that exhibited a hard yellow tissue near the kidney in combination with some fibrous connective tissue where the swimbladder used to be. We wanted to investigate any association between this condition and the presence of LMBV. All fish in 2000 were submitted for LMBV analysis and 6 fish were found to be positive (out of 405 fish). Only one fish out of the nine found with hard yellow tissue was found to be positive for LMBV. We continue to work with the SCDNR, NCWRC, and USFWS -Warm Springs lab to try and understand these results.

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- **Georgia Department of Natural Resources**  
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- **Burton Blueback Herring Project**  
In the early 1990s, anglers illegally introduced non-native blueback herring into Lake Burton. Lake Burton is a 2,780-acre headwater reservoir in the upper Savannah River basin, which is located in the northeast Georgia mountains. Downstream of Lake Burton are five smaller impoundments that stair-step through the river valley. These reservoirs are characterized as oligotrophic and historically supported a sparse forage base consisting of a few, very large gizzard shad. By the mid-1990s, blueback herring were well established in Lake Burton and all downstream reservoirs. By 1999, population numbers reached very high densities approaching 8,000 herring/acre, based on hydroacoustics sampling.

Associated with the rapid expansion of blueback herring in Lake Burton was a concomitant decline in largemouth bass abundance. Changes in largemouth bass population dynamics included a 50% decline in electrofishing catch rates, a 60% decline in young-of-year density, and a 60% decline in angler success despite relatively consistent fishing pressure over time. Food habits analysis of adult blueback herring and one-month old largemouth bass from Lake Burton indicated strong dietary overlap between both species and significant predation by blueback herring on hatchling bass. In an attempt to reduce the herring population, a bioenergetics approach was used to calculate predatory stocking rates. Brown trout and walleye were subsequently stocked into selected reservoirs at densities ranging from 20 to 35 fish/acre. To mitigate the effects of predation on hatchling bass, bass spawning habitat in selected cove sites around Lake Burton was enhanced to provide more suitable substrate for nesting and sheltered areas for young bass.