

Historical Ecology of Striped Bass Stocking

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Striped Bass (*Morone saxatilis*) is an anadromous fish species that is native to the tidal rivers and estuaries of the Atlantic coast of North America and the Gulf of Mexico. It supported strong commercial fisheries within its native range from colonial times until the population crash of the 1980s. The advent of the railroads and steamships, in addition to a notable decrease in fish catches, resulted in the perceived need for stocking food and endangered food fish species in all appropriate and available waters. The subsequent creation of the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries encouraged research regarding aquaculture with the first attempt at spawning striped bass occurring in 1873. By the late 1870s, striped bass had been successfully stocked into the San Francisco Bay and eventually produced a self-sustaining population. Information is needed to untangle the confusion and misinformation concerning genetic integrity and signatures of North American striped bass populations. Recreating this history is a daunting undertaking but has a high potential for success. The goal of the study is to reconstruct the striped bass stocking history of the state and federal hatchery stocking programs back to the 1880s.