

GA DNR STREAM SURVEY TEAM'S STATE OF THE FISH

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Abstract. Georgia is known for its abundance of fresh water and diversity of fishes. However, streams and rivers throughout Georgia are affected by a variety of anthropogenic stressors. These stressors may degrade the physical and chemical composition of streams and impacts on biotic life may persist over time. To provide a tool for assessing the biotic integrity of wadeable streams and rivers, Georgia DNR's Wildlife Resources Division Stream Survey Team (SST) developed an Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) using fish as indicators. Fish are long-lived organisms and the community composition reflects the quality of the water and available habitat present at a specific location. Recognizing that both geology and inherent differences between river basins affect fish diversity and abundance, the IBI criteria are ecoregion and river basin specific. Scores compiled using the fish IBI are sent to Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) for inclusion on the 305(b)/303(d) list of waters and are designated as meeting or not meeting Clean Water Act standards. Since inception, SST has collected nearly 1500 samples at approximately 1300 unique stream segments and reported approximately 1000 IBI scores to EPD, of which nearly half were designated as not meeting Clean Water Act standards.