Abstract:

The habitat concept in inland fisheries has been less studied than wildlife ecology. Since 1950, the cumulative number of publications about “freshwater or inland habitat and fisheries management” has been 60%–95% less than those considering “habitat and wildlife management.” The number of publications about “marine, river, and stream habitat and fisheries management” has also generally exceeded those for “lake habitat and fisheries management.” We provide a perspective comparing inland fish and wildlife habitat management systems and highlight lessons from wildlife ecology that could benefit inland fisheries. We reason that wildlife habitat management has become widespread and accepted because humans share habitats with wildlife and positive/ negative responses to habitat restorations/loss are directly observable. We recommend that inland fisheries habitat studies and restorations include opportunities for humans to directly observe the ecological benefits of such practices. To support aquatic habitat management efforts, we suggest that dedicated funding solutions be considered to mitigate aquatic habitat loss. In theory, such a system would provide benefits to inland fish populations that parallel those provided to wildlife through state and federal stamps. Although aquatic habitat conservation and restoration may not solve management issues as rapidly, it will promote long-term sustainability and resiliency of diverse inland fish populations.

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