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An Analytical Approach to Fish Conservation Prioritization

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Abstract Text:

Current methods for prioritizing fish species conservation range from relatively quick and cost-effective expert opinions to thorough and time-consuming quantitative Species Status Assessments. While these methodologies identify imperiled species, they also have limitations: expert opinions might be biased towards some species over others (*e.g.*, only fishes or fish communities of interest to the expert) whereas labor intensive Species Status Assessments are feasible for only a few targeted species. The purpose of this study was to develop a repeatable, quantitative methodology for use at the regional level. The demonstrated methodology incorporated metrics consistent with the concepts of redundancy, resiliency, and representation used in Species Status Assessments. Three variables were assessed for each species: the number of independent drainages and reaches with vouchered specimen occurrence (redundancy), relative abundances by reach (resiliency), and qualitative measure of commonality (representation). The final species rankings generated by this method were compared to the current state and federal lists to assess the methodology's ability to score and rank fishes. These rankings can be used by others to identify and quantify fish imperilment, as defined regionally, and the methodology can be easily applied elsewhere for a quantified assessment using a common language of fish imperilment.

Title: An Analytical Approach to Fish Conservation Prioritization

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