

# Ipswich River

The Ipswich River is a 34-mile-long stream that originates at the confluence of Lubber and Maple Meadow Brooks in Wilmington and runs into the Atlantic Ocean at Ipswich Bay. If restored, the Ipswich River could provide significant spawning potential for river herring as well as other anadromous fish species such as American shad.

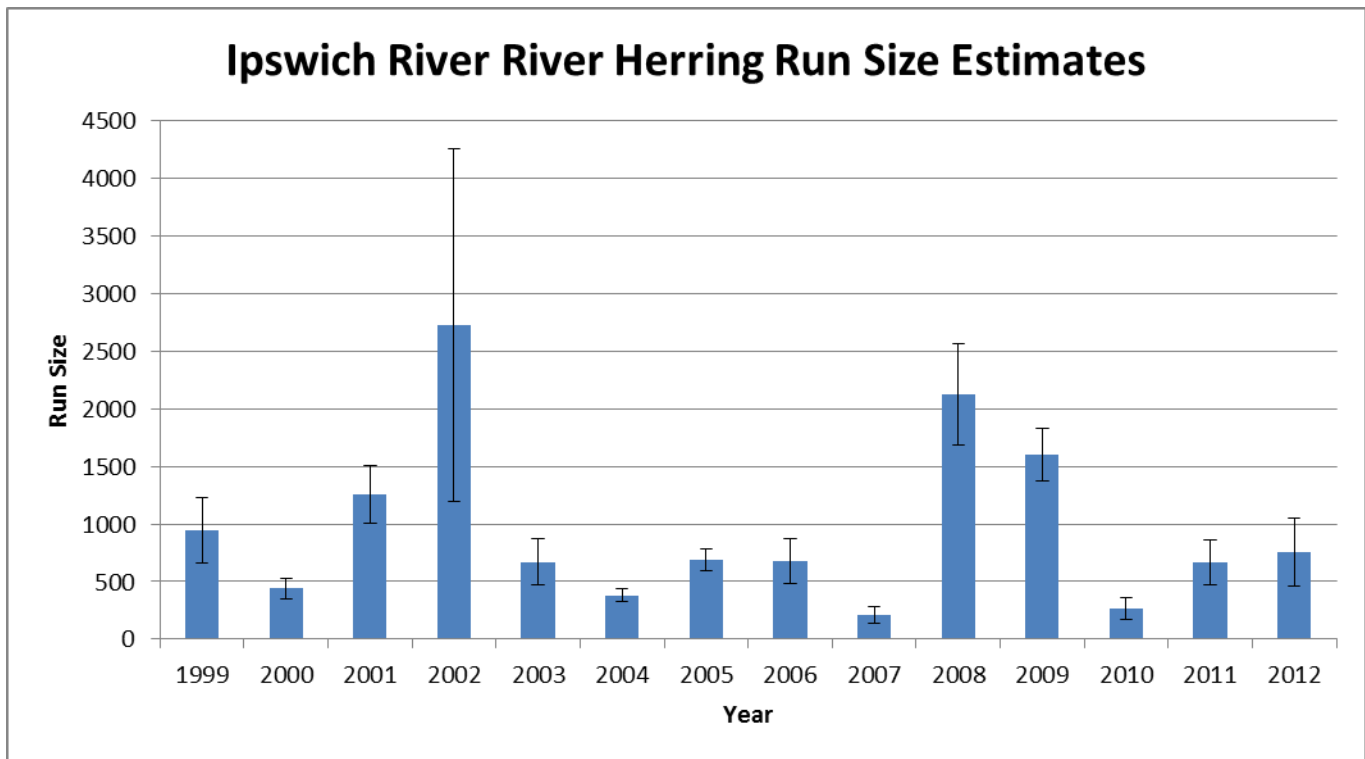


*The Ipswich River in winter.*

There are three dams along the main stem of the Ipswich River: the Ipswich Mills/Sylvania Dam, the Willowdale Dam, and the Bostik Dam. The Ipswich Mills Dam is fitted with a relatively new concrete Denil fish ladder with wooden baffles, while the Willowdale Dam has an older, less efficient concrete notched weir-pool fish ladder. The Bostik Dam has no fish ladder and is not passable.

## Population estimate

The estimated size of this year's Ipswich River run is **756 ± ~297**. If free of obstructions, the Ipswich River would provide approximately **278 acres** of river herring spawning habitat. Between 1990 and 2002, the Ipswich River was stocked with 31,147 blueback herring by the Division of Marine Fisheries. The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries used a trap to obtain absolute counts of run size in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009, finding 377, 158, 131 and 187 river herring for each year, respectively. These absolute counts reveal that Visual Counts overestimated run size in 2006 and particularly in 2008/2009, perhaps because herring were swimming up and down the ladder repeatedly and were probably counted more than once in some instances.



## Restoration on the Ipswich River

The main group working towards the restoration of the Ipswich River is the Ipswich River Watershed Association, a grassroots organization based in Ipswich, Massachusetts whose goal is to work in partnership with communities, businesses, schools, and other organizations and residents to protect the river.

A major focus of their efforts has been reducing water withdrawals and groundwater pumping from the Ipswich River watershed in order to combat chronic low water levels during the summer that have led to multiple fish kills. The Ipswich River was named one of America's "Most Endangered Rivers" by American Rivers in 2003, and portions of the Ipswich River run dry every summer.



The Ipswich River Watershed Association has also worked to restore the river's fisheries, including river herring, and has advocated for the removal of all three of the dams on the main stem of the river.. Currently, the Curtis Pond Dam on Boston Brook (a tributary of the Ipswich River) is slated for removal by the Town of Danvers.

## Ipswich River Herring Count

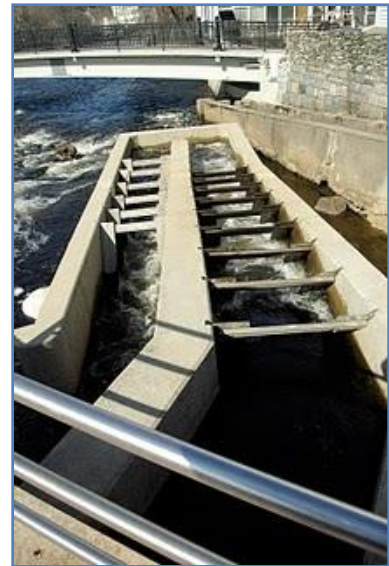
The Ipswich River Watershed Association has been coordinating fish counts at the Sylvania Dam fish ladder since 1999, making it one of the longest-standing fish counts in the state of Massachusetts.

**2009 Fish Count:** 52 volunteers, 309 volunteer-hours, 5.3 mean counts / day.

**2010 Fish Count:** 57 volunteers, 228 volunteer-hours, 4 mean counts / day.

**2011 Fish Count:** 68 volunteers, 380 volunteer-hours, 5.3 mean counts / day.

**2012 Fish Count:** 52 volunteers, 364 volunteer-hours, 5 mean counts / day.



For more information on the Ipswich River herring count, contact IRWA Programs Coordinator Ryan O'Donnell at [rodonnell@ipswich.org](mailto:rodonnell@ipswich.org).

*The Central Street fish ladder.*

