



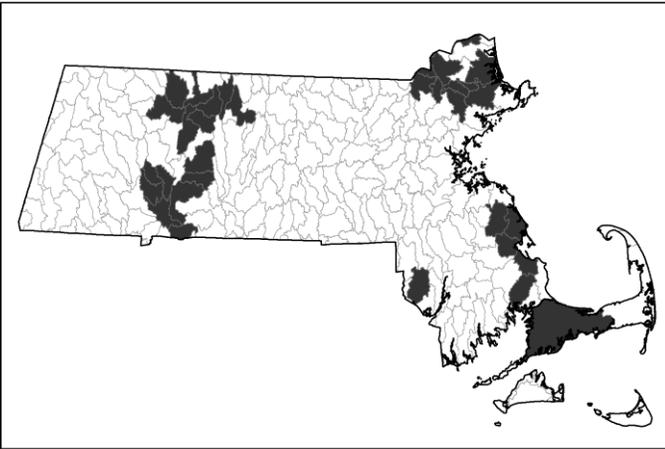
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Sea Lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*

State Status: **None**
Federal Status: **None**

Species Description: The Sea Lamprey is a primitive, eel-like fish that lacks jaws, scales, paired fins, and bones. It has a cartilaginous skeleton, one nostril between the eyes, and seven pairs of pore-like gill openings. Adults are usually greater than 24 inches in total length. Sea Lampreys are anadromous. Adults are parasitic, attaching themselves to a variety of oceanic species and feeding on their blood and body fluids. After two years at sea, the adults enter fresh water in the spring and spawn in July. After spawning the adults die. Juveniles, eyeless larva known as ammocoetes, burrow into the stream bottom and live as filter feeders for four to five years. Eventually ammocoetes transform into young adults that migrate to the ocean.

Distribution and Abundance: Sea Lampreys are common in Massachusetts and enter numerous coastal streams and the Connecticut and Merrimack rivers. Records of Sea Lamprey passage at the Holyoke dam on the Connecticut River demonstrate that current abundance is roughly 50% of the historic numbers.



Data from DFW Fisheries Surveys and Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology

Habitat Description: Sea Lampreys spawn in small- to medium-sized streams with gravel or rocky substrates, which are connected to the ocean.

Threats: Like other anadromous fish, Sea Lamprey populations have been reduced or eliminated in some areas by damming and pollution. The factors which have caused an apparent decline in this species are most likely due to loss of spawning and rearing habitat, because of dams.

Reference:

This species description was adapted, with permission, from:

Karsten E. Hartel, David B. Halliwell, and Alan E. Launer.
2002. *Inland Fishes of Massachusetts*. Massachusetts Audubon Society, Lincoln, Massachusetts.

Updated 2015

A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

1 Rabbit Hill Rd., Westborough, MA; tel: 508-389-6300; fax: 508-389-7890; www.mass.gov/dfw