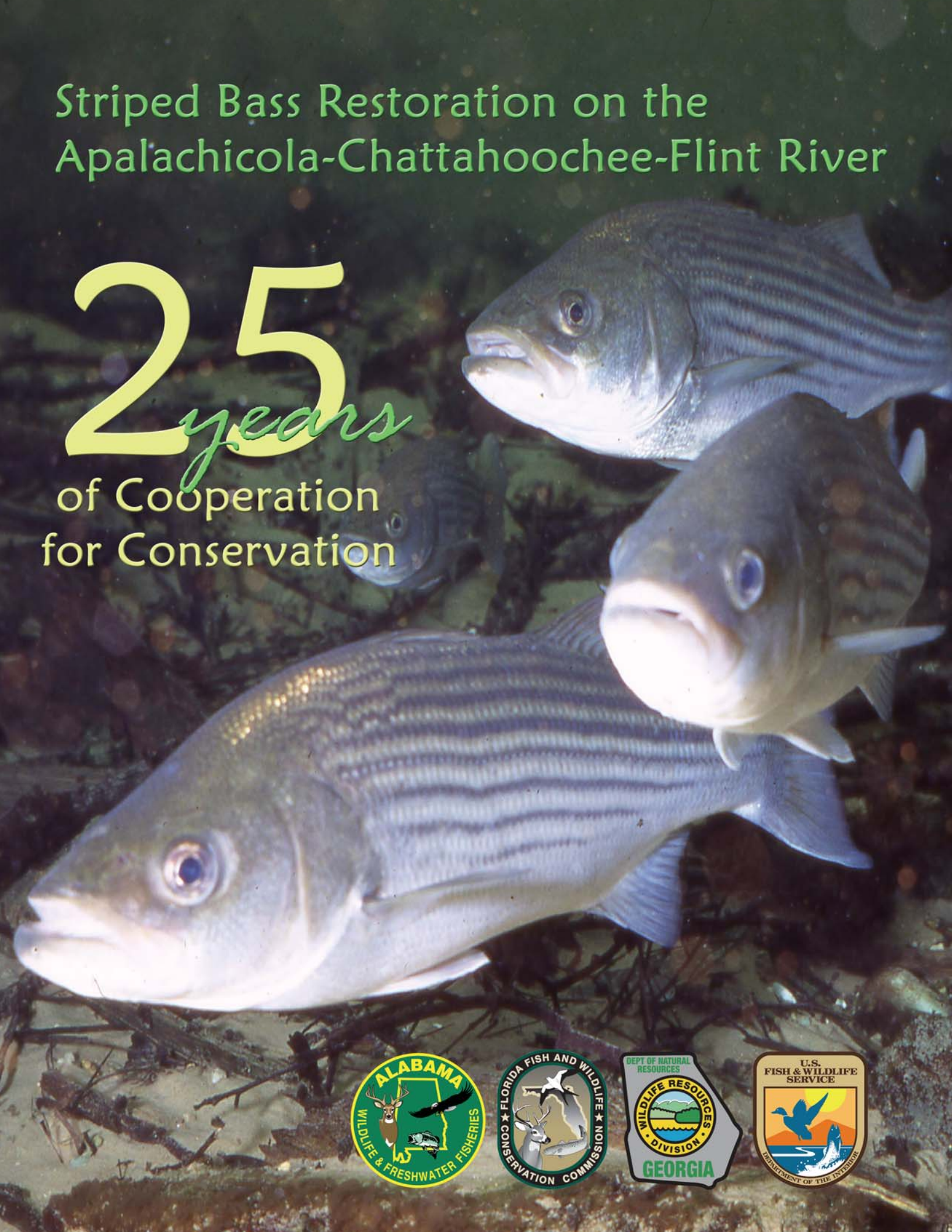
Striped Bass Restoration on the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River

25 *years* of Cooperation for Conservation



25 years of Gulf Striped Bass Restoration

For 25 years, Alabama, Florida, Georgia and the Federal government have worked together for the protection and restoration of Gulf striped bass in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River System.

The genetically unique Gulf strain of striped bass was once common to rivers of the Gulf of Mexico. By the 1960's, its population had declined significantly due to poor water quality and loss of habitat from dam construction. The last population of native striped bass survived in low numbers in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) river system in Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

For 25 years, these states and the Federal government have worked together for the protection and restoration of Gulf striped bass in the ACF. As a result of this strong partnership, knowledge of the life history of striped bass has improved, and essential coolwater habitats have been protected or rehabilitated. A large cooperative stocking program was implemented, and anglers have set new records. This work has been a catalyst for striped bass restoration throughout the Gulf region.

ACF River System

Stocking Success

- 7 State and 6 Federal hatcheries
- Over 1 million fish stocked annually
- Hatchery fish marked to distinguish from wild
- Complete genetic catalog of broodstock and captive fish
- Improved ability to stock more pure Gulf fish as a result of genetic work
- Alternative broodstock sources developed
- Propagated fish available for other Gulf of Mexico rivers
- Performance testing completed

Trophy Fishery Improvements

- New FL state record of 42 1/4 lbs.
- Ten fold increase in recreational catch below Jim Woodruff Lock and Dam
- Recreational fishery developed in Alabama (*Lewis Smith Lake, Lake Martin, Lake Yates*), Florida (*Blackwater River, Lake Talquin*), and Georgia (*Flint River, Walter F George Lake, West Point Lake, Bartlett's Ferry Lake*)

Monitoring

- Annual evaluation of stocking success and food availability
- Relative Index of Young-of-Year developed to estimate year class strength
- Annual angler creel surveys to evaluate recruitment and recreational fishing
- Radio and sonic telemetry studies have identified essential thermal refuges

Habitat Restoration and Protection

- Rehabilitated thermal refuge habitats in the Apalachicola and Flint Rivers
- Removed the Dead Lake Dam on the Chipola River
- Purchased Radium Springs, Flint River, Georgia for habitat protection
- Thermal refuges in Lake Seminole and the Flint River now closed to fishing during the summer
- Improved operation of reservoirs and dams
- Evaluating fish passage at dams

Future Plans

- Evaluating optimum stocking strategies
- Producing adequate numbers of Gulf Striped bass to meet stocking needs Gulf-wide
- Protecting genetic integrity and diversity
- Monitoring restoration progress
- Protecting and restoring additional habitat
- Informing the public about restoration efforts

Partners

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
www.outdooralabama.com/fishing/freshwater

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
www.myfwc.com

Georgia Department of Natural Resources
http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
www.fws.gov

25 years of Cooperation for Conservation

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