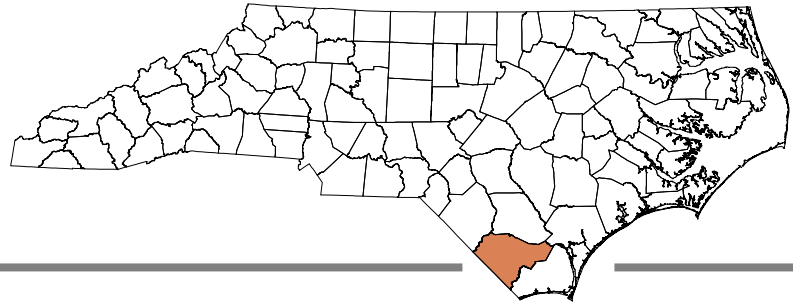

Waccamaw silverside

Menidia extensa

(Skip jack, glass minnow)

Threatened (April 8, 1987)



Description: The Waccamaw silverside is a small, almost transparent minnow-like fish with a silver lateral stripe. Adults are about 2.5 inches (6.5 cm) long. It is laterally compressed with large eyes and a jaw that angles upward sharply. There are two widely separated dorsal fins; the first has thin spines. It may often be seen jumping out of the water.

Life History: This species is a surface-feeder and travels in schools. Food sources include zooplankton, particularly cladocerans (microcrustaceans). Spawning occurs in open water near the shoreline from March through July, peaking when water temperatures are 68-72°F. Females produce about 150 eggs. Maturity is attained by the following spring when most adults die off after spawning. A few may survive a second winter. Reproductive failure for a single year could result in the species' extinction.

Habitat: Forages in areas of shallow, high quality clear, open water over clean, dark sand substrate with no vegetation.

Distribution: Endemic to Lake Waccamaw, Columbus County and occasionally the upper Waccamaw River (below the lake) when water is high. This limited range has been designated critical habitat by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Lake Waccamaw is a natural lake fed by acidic swamp streams. However, the neutral composition of the water may be a result of calcareous limestone, that underlies the lake and is exposed on the north shore. The silverside

inhabits open water throughout the lake, schooling near the surface over shallow, dark bottom areas.

Threats: Indiscriminate logging, land use changes such as stream channelizing and bridge and road construction, chemical pollution from pesticides and herbicides, and wastewater discharge. These produce siltation and change water quality, temperature, and nutrient enrichment which threaten spawning success and increase odds for extinction due to the short life span and restricted global distribution.

Management Recommendations: Monitoring and control of water quality by regulating land and natural resource use and development in the area.

Sources: Cooper et al. 1977, Lowe et al. 1990, Mignogno pers. com., USFWS 1992a.

