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ANGLER RESPONSE TO HARVEST REGULATIONS IN MONTANA'S YELLOWSTONE RIVER PADDLEFISH FISHERY

ABSTRACT

A written, 15-question survey of anglers snagging for paddlefish (Polyodon spathula) was conducted at a popular fishing site on the Yellowstone River, Montana. Its purpose was to obtain opinions and preferences on specific regulations, including the reduction in the annual bag limit from two to one fish, catch-and-release fishing, and on the possible implementation of a harvest quota for the stock. Questionnaires were completed by 258 snaggers over the six-week

however, in other fisheries (Elser 1986),
including the Missouri River in
Montana above Fort Peck Dam. In

larger number of persons who
purchased licenses and tags but did not
fish. Questionnaires were completed by
258 persons, or an estimated 40% of the

Responses were summarized and analyzed with a Chi-Square statistic according to age (age 34 years and younger versus 35 years and older), sex and state of residence (Montana resident

Slightly more snaggers agreed than disagreed with the conservation value of the bag limit reduction (Table 2). This split response occurred even though the estimate for the reduction in the annual

versus non-resident). For all questions, $P=0.05$ was required for statistical significance.

bag limit from two to one fish had been presented at public meetings in eastern Montana. No significant differences

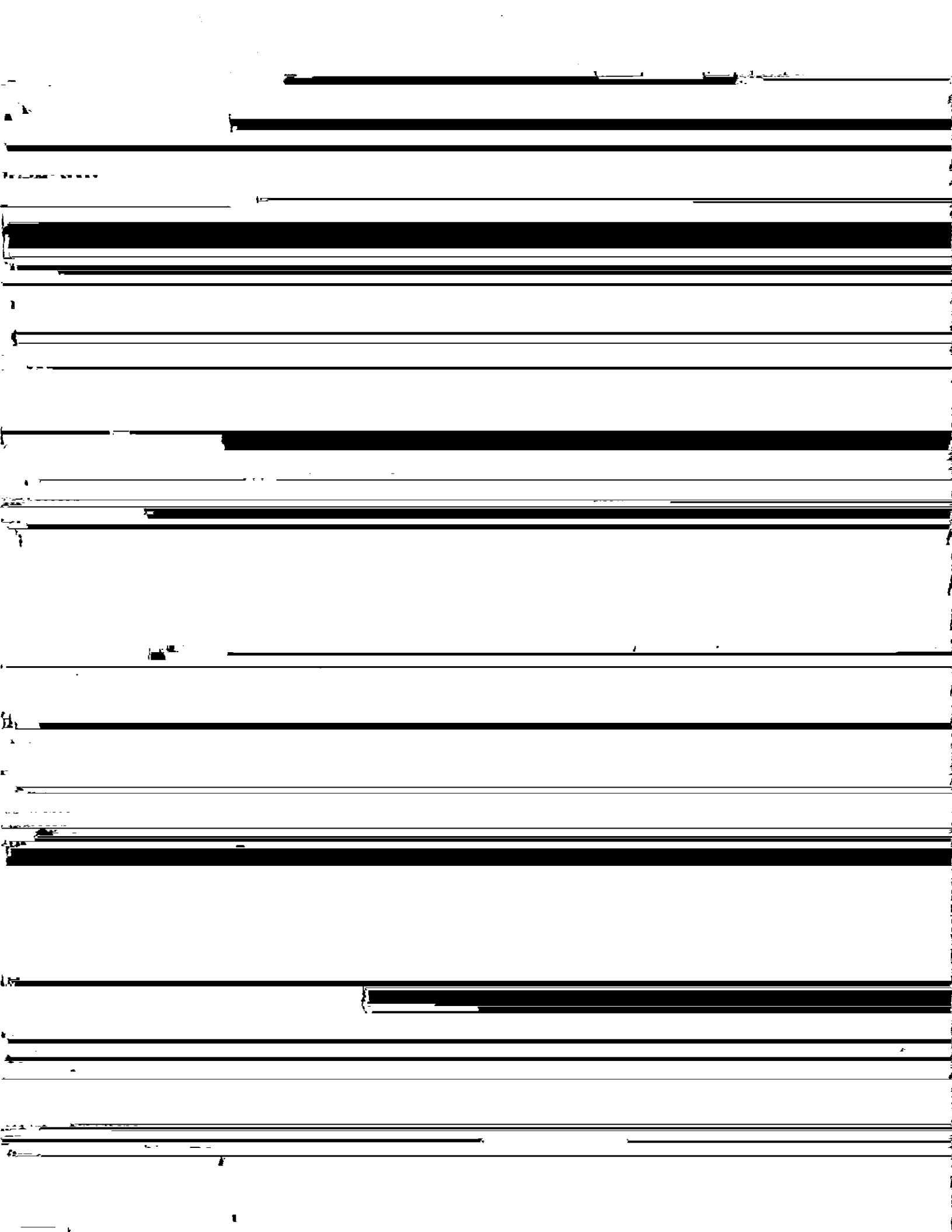
Of the 258 snaggers who completed the questionnaire, 235 (91%) were male and 23 (9%) were female, 139 (54%)

residence ($P=0.26$).

Table 2. Percent responses to questions related

Support for no quota option was strong, but snaggers most favored Inseason Closure (Table 3). No significant differences in response to the

Snaggers were split on whether a two-fish or one-fish annual bag limit would be preferable under a quota system (Table 4). Thirty-eight percent of



necessary under present fishing interest
and a one-fish bag limit.

The strong support (73% of

evaluated through inspections of
recaptured fish and with searches for
dead or distressed paddlefish. Results

status, management and
propagation. North Central
Division Amer. Fish. Soc. Spec.

pelagic species (TOPS) Tournament
and Fish Trackers, Inc. tag and

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