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Presentation Type:

Contributed Oral Presentation

Title of Presentation:

**Fishing through the pandemic in Nebraska**

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Chizinski, C.J., and M. P. Gruntorad. Fishing through the pandemic in Nebraska. Pathways Conference, May 1-4, 2022, Bremerton, Washington. (Oral Presentation)

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**Keywords:** COVID-19, fishing, R3, human dimensions, motivations

Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic had profound effects on recreational activities throughout the world, affecting who participated, how they participated, and where they participated. Wildlife-based activities throughout the United States, like hunting and fishing, appeared to experience a resurgence during the height of the pandemic in many states. We combined information gained from license sales and surveys to explore recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) of anglers prior, during, and after the height of the pandemic in Nebraska. We observed an increase in more than 30,000 anglers in 2020, which was partly driven by an increase in reactivated resident anglers (those that had participated in the past, but not in 2019). However, the proportion of recruited anglers (new anglers to appear in the database since 2010) remained fairly consistent with prior to the pandemic. Surveys were used to better understand the reasons why individuals chose to begin fishing during the pandemic. Results showed that many of the most frequently indicated motivations to begin fishing during the pandemic match those traditional reasons people fish (e.g., spend time with family, connect with the outdoors). However, many respondents indicated that fishing was viewed as a safe activity to participate during the pandemic and many other competing activities had been cancelled. These results point to good news for fish and wildlife management agencies in that it is possible to increase numbers participating in hunting and fishing by appealing to the well-established reasons why individuals participate in wildlife-based activities.