

Changing Trends in the Fishery of the Victoria Reservoir

S. Nathanael and E.I.L. Silva

Department of Environmental Sciences
Institute of Fundamental Studies
Hantana Road, Kandy, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT. *To optimize the use of the Victoria reservoir as a resource for fish production, changing trends in the fishery were monitored over a five year period, starting in 1989 when fishing officially commenced in this reservoir.*

The annual fish production of 193 metric tons in 1989 declined by 59.1% in 1994 with a corresponding decline in the catch per unit effort (CPUE) from 8.2 to 4.2 kg per craft. The landing size of the principal marketable species Oreochromis mossambicus decreased significantly ($p < 0.05$) during the same period. Two of the stocked species, Oreochromis niloticus and Cyprinus carpio established themselves in the reservoir while Oreochromis mossambicus, the mainstay of the fishery, declined progressively. Although the number of fibre-glass boats operated has not changed much since 1990, the number of fishing days has declined following the decline in yield. Illicit fishing using wooden canoes and small meshed gill nets and cast nets increased significantly. Withdrawal of state patronage in July 1990 resulted in de-stabilizing regular stocking, the training of fishermen and withdrawing subsidies on fishing gear and crafts.

The principal factor responsible for the declining trend of this fishery was over-exploitation caused by unwarranted human activities due to the absence of supervisory control following the cessation of state patronage. It is evident that a suitable management strategy needs to be implemented for the sustainable utilization of this resource.