



DEC Adopts New Freshwater Fishing Regulations - A New DEC Press Release

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New or Modified Regulations Pertaining to Sportfish Species, Baitfish and Other Non-Game Fish and to Gear and Angling Methods

Statewide Fishing Regulations Eliminate Unnecessary Special Regulations

New freshwater fishing regulations go into effect April 1, 2015, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Joe Martens today announced.

"DEC modifies its freshwater sportfishing regulations as necessary to help maintain the fantastic freshwater sportfishing New York is known for," said Commissioner Martens. Changes are made to the regulations governing sportfishing and related activities to address management needs in specific waters, as well as to accommodate angler and other stakeholder desires. Many of the proposed changes resulted from DEC's focus on consolidating regulations where possible and eliminating special regulations that are no longer warranted and have become outdated."

The modifications to the sportfishing regulations are a result of a two-year process which included biological assessment, discussions with anglers and a formal 45-day public comment period. DEC used public input to finalize the changes. These regulations will be published in the 2015-16 Freshwater Fishing Regulations Guide which will be available at all license sales vendors in March.

Highlights of the final changes include:

New or Modified Regulations Pertaining to Sportfish Species:

- Establishing a closed statewide season for sauger.

- Modifying the statewide regulation for muskellunge by increasing the minimum size limit to 40 inches and adjusting the season opener from the third Saturday in June to the last Saturday in May.
- Providing consistency between the proposed statewide muskellunge regulation changes and the existing muskellunge regulations for specific waters including Lake Champlain, and St. Lawrence County rivers and streams, as well as for both muskellunge and tiger muskellunge at Chautauqua Lake.
- Increasing the minimum size limit for muskellunge to 54 inches in the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River.
- Increasing the minimum size limit for walleye at Honeoye Lake from 15 to 18 inches.
- Establishing year-round trout seasons, with catch and release fishing only from October 16 through March 31, at the following streams in Western New York: Chenunda Creek, Oatka Creek, Clear Creek, Fenton Brook, Prendergast Creek, and waters in Allegany State Park.
- Initiating a catch and release season for trout for sections of the Salmon River (Franklin County) and Ninemile Creek (Onondaga County), and extend the catch and release season at Fall Creek (Cayuga Lake).
- Establishing a special trout regulation of a daily creel limit of five fish with no more than two fish longer than 12 inches, for some waters in Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and St. Lawrence counties, as well as for Little River and Oswegatchie River (St. Lawrence County), and Oriskany Creek (Oneida County).
- Establishing an all-year trout season, with a 12-inch minimum size limit and daily limit of three fish, at Hinkley and Prospect Reservoirs in Herkimer and Oneida counties, North Lake in Herkimer County, and for an additional section of the North Branch Saranac River in Franklin and Clinton counties.
- Establishing an all year season, with a 12-inch minimum size limit and daily limit of three fish, for both trout and Landlocked salmon at Millsite Lake in Jefferson County.
- Expanding the current special trout regulation for Pine, Boottree, Town Line, Deer and Horseshoe ponds (St. Lawrence County) to the entire set of waters that are a part of the Massawepie Easement.
- Expanding the current trout and salmon special regulations for the Fulton Chain of lakes to the connected water body Old Forge Pond.
- Establishing a 15-inch minimum size limit for lake trout and clarify that the statewide regulations apply for other species for Owasco Outlet (Cayuga County).
- Modifying trout and/or salmon regulations for Star Lake and Trout Lake (St. Lawrence County), by increasing the minimum size limit for trout to 12 inches and reducing the daily creel limit to three. Add landlocked salmon to species with an open year-round season for Star Lake.
- Establishing an open year-round trout season for Sylvia Lake (St. Lawrence County), with a 12-inch minimum size limit and three fish daily creel limit, with ice fishing permitted.
- Extending Great Lakes tributary regulations upstream to the section of the Genesee River (Monroe County) from State Route 104 Bridge upstream to the Lower Falls.
- Exempting Old Seneca Lake Inlet from the Finger Lakes tributary regulations.
- Clarifying, in regulation, a definition for "catch and release fishing" and defining how incidental catches of untargeted fish are to be handled.

Elimination of special regulations that are no longer warranted. Statewide fishing regulations now apply:

- Deleting the special minimum size and daily creel limit walleye regulation for Fern Lake (Clinton County), Lake Algonquin (Hamilton County), and Franklin Falls Flow, Lower Saranac Lake and Rainbow Lake in Franklin County, and Tully Lake (Cortland and Onondaga Counties).
- Eliminating the special regulations (examples being minimum size limit, daily creel limit, season length and/or method of take) for trout, landlocked salmon and/or lake trout, at several waters including Schoharie Reservoir, Susquehanna River (between Otsego and Goodyear Lakes), Launt Pond (Delaware County), Basswood Pond (Otsego County), Lake Algonquin (Hamilton County), Jennings Park Pond (Hamilton County), Hoosic River and Little Hoosic River (Rensselaer County), Hudson River (Saratoga County), North Branch Saranac River (Clinton and Franklin Counties), Clear and Wheeler Ponds (Herkimer County), Cold Brook (St. Lawrence County), and West Branch of the St. Regis River (St. Lawrence County).
- Eliminating the special brown trout and landlocked salmon regulations (minimum size limit, daily creel limit and season length) at Otsego Lake.
- Eliminating the 10-inch minimum size limit for black bass at Lily Pond and Pack Forest Lake in Warren County; eliminate the "all year - any size" special regulation for black bass at Cayuta Creek in Tioga County; and adopt a consistent minimum size limit for black bass for sections of the Schoharie Creek at 10 inches.
- Eliminating the daily creel limit special regulation for sunfish and yellow perch in Cumberland Bay (Lake Champlain), as well as eliminate the prohibition on the sale of yellow perch taken from Cumberland Bay.
- Eliminating the minimum size limit special regulation for lake trout in the Essex Chain of Lakes.
- Eliminating the separate special regulation for trout for Ischua Creek, and apply the Cattaraugus County regulation.

Regulations Pertaining to Baitfish and Other Non-Game Fish:

- Prohibiting the use of fish as bait in newly acquired trout waters: Fish Hole Pond and Balsam Pond in Franklin County; and Clear Pond in Washington County.
- Removing the baitfish prohibition on Harlow Lake, Genesee County.
- Removing all currently listed eligible waters for the commercial collection of baitfish: in Clinton County, except Lake Champlain; in Essex County, except Lake Champlain and Lake Flower; in Franklin County, except Lake Flower, Lower Saranac Lake, Raquette River, Tupper Lake and Upper Saranac Lake; in Fulton County; in Hamilton County, except Indian Lake, Lake Pleasant and Long Lake; in Saratoga County, except the Hudson River, Lake Lonely and outlet Lake Lonely to Kayaderosseras Creek, Mohawk River and Saratoga Lake; in Warren County, except the Hudson River; and in Washington County, except the Hudson River and Lake Champlain.
- Adding madtoms and stonecats to the approved list of fish that may be used, collected and sold as baitfish.
- Eliminating "snatching" of burbot in Scotion Creek (Clinton County).

- Eliminating smelt "dipping" in Raquette Lake (Hamilton County).
- Modifying smelt regulations for Cayuga and Owasco Lakes, for consistency with five Western Finger Lakes.
- Eliminating the prohibition on taking smelt and suckers with a scap or dip net in Willow Creek (Tompkins County).
- Removing the allowance for snatching lake whitefish at Otsego Lake.

Regulations Pertaining to Gear and Angling Methods:

- Streamlining what devices may be used for ice fishing by modifying the statewide regulation to allow for a total of seven devices that may be used to fish through the ice; as well as allow for a total of 15 devices that may be used to fish through the ice at Lake Champlain.
- Eliminating the gear restrictions at Follensby Clear Pond (Franklin County) that permits ice fishing but prohibits the use of tip-ups.
- With the exception of the Salmon River, permitting the use of floating lures with multiple hooks with multiple hook points, on all Lake Ontario tributaries.
- Clarifying the definition of floating lures on Lake Ontario tributaries to: "A floating lure is a lure that floats while at rest in water with or without any weight attached to the line, leader, or lure".
- Clarifying that the current regulation for the Great Lake tributaries restricting the use of hooks with added weight was not intended to ban the use of small jigs.
- Expanding the prohibition of weight added to the line, leader, swivels, artificial fly or lures to all Lake Ontario tributaries (i.e. beyond a limited group of tributaries) from September 1 through March 31 of the following year.
- Clarifying the use of multiple hooks with multiple hook points on Lake Erie tributaries is legal, as well as clarify that the use of flies with up to two hook points is legal on all Great Lake tributaries.
- Replacing Lake Ontario tributary regulations for St. Lawrence River tributaries in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties with statewide terminal tackle restrictions.
- Redefining the upstream limit for spearfishing on the Salmon River (Franklin County).
- Clarifying the description of gear (gill nets) that is allowed for, in the Finger Lakes, for the collection of alewives for personal use as bait.
- Reinstating the prohibition on large landing nets (nets larger than 50 inches around the frame or with a handle longer than 20 inches) for Finger Lakes tributaries except for those sections that are specifically identified.

In addition to the above, several changes were made to properly establish or clarify an earlier regulation change, better define an existing regulation (by rewording), or address regulations that have not changed but are now redundant and covered elsewhere in the regulations including as a result of consolidation.

Governor Cuomo's NY Open for Fishing and Hunting Initiative is an effort to improve recreational opportunities for sportsmen and women and to boost tourism activities throughout the state. This includes streamlining fishing and hunting licenses, reducing license fees, improving access for fishing and increasing hunting opportunities in New York State. In support

of this initiative, \$10 million in NY Works funding has been dedicated to fish hatchery repairs and 50 new land and water access projects such as boat launches, hunting blinds, trails and parking areas.

Under the initiative, the 2015-16 Executive Budget proposes an additional \$8 million for state land access projects and an additional \$4 million for the state's hatcheries in NY Works funding. The Budget also proposes to create a new capital account which along with federal Pittman-Robertson funds will be used to manage, protect and restore fish and wildlife habitat, and to improve and develop public access for fish and wildlife-related recreation. The complete list of sportfishing regulation changes can be viewed under ["Recently Adopted \(Previous Twelve Months\)"](#) on DEC's website. All comments received were categorized and reviewed for substance, and staff responses were compiled. A summary of the "Assessment of Public Comment" is available on [the Department of State website](#).