

FISH CODE PROPOSAL (August 12, 2025)



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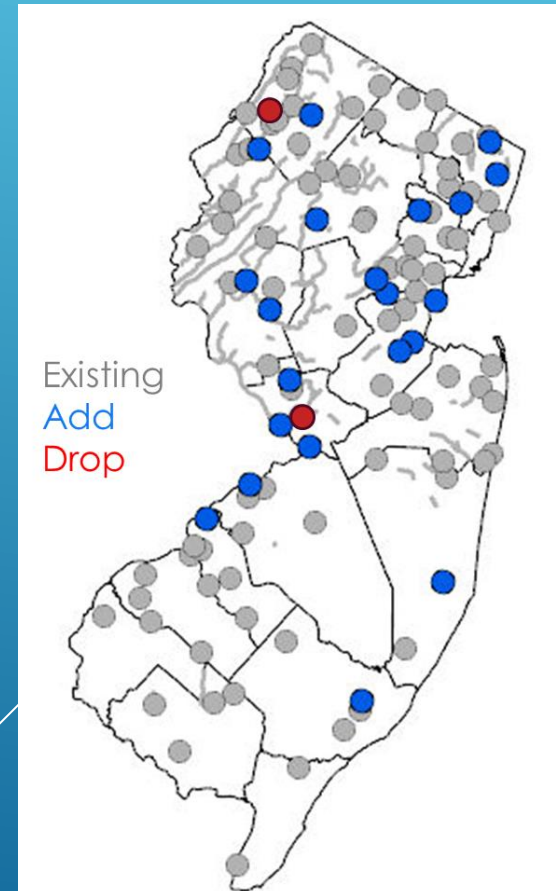


- Approved by Fish Committee 8/15/24
- Approved by F&G Council 10/8/24
- NJDEP Launch Meeting 12/17/24
- Virtual Public Meeting 1/16/25
- Filing Date NJ Register 7/18/25
- F&G Council Vote 8/12/25
- NJ Register Publication 8/18/25
- Public Hearing 9/10/25 (6:30 P.M. @ CRO)
- Close of public comment period 10/16/25
- F&G Council vote on public comment 12/ 16/25
- Adoption February 16 or March 2?



Fish Code Proposal: Trout (General)

- “Opening Day” is being redefined as the 2nd Saturday in April instead of selecting a specific date. (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.2.)
- Addition of 23 Small Ponds to Trout Stocking Program (including Lake Takanassee (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.3(i)) (in populated areas, good access, high catch rates, preseason only, etc.)
- Remove 2 waters: N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.3(i)
Colonial Lake (Lawrence Twp., Mercer, 25 acres, 1,390 Trout)
Neldon Brook (Stillwater Twp., Sussex, 300 Trout)
- Remove Pre-Season Closure on all trout stocked lakes & ponds (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.3)
- Reduce Summer/Fall/Winter creel from 4/day to 2/day (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.3(b)(e))
 - 6 trout limit from Opening Day until May 31
 - Rivers and Streams still closed during 3-week preseason
- Expand stocking boundaries on Lopatcong Ck, Pompton River, N/Br Raritan River (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.3(i) 16 and N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.3(b)(e)



Fish Code Proposal: Trout (Special)

Pequannock River

- Change the 'General Trout Regs' to 'Trout-Stocked, Wild Brown Trout Managed' on (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.6(a))
- Minimum size for Brown Trout increased from 9" to 12".
- Total creel for all combined trout remains the same, but only 2 trout can be Brown Trout (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.6(b))



Lake Trout

- Merrill Creek Reservoir
 - 2 fish (15" to less than 24") &
 - 2 fish (greater than or equal to 24")
- Round Valley Reservoir
 - 8 fish (15" to less than 24") &
 - 1 fish (greater than or equal to 24")
- Remove catch & release season at both, open to year-round harvest at both reservoirs N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.8(b).



WARMWATER & MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS

- Add Round Valley Reservoir & Merrill Creek Reservoir to Lunker Bass Regulations: minimum size 15" daily limit of 3 instead of 12" and of 5 to maintain quality fisheries N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.13(e)
- Remove Conservation Regulations on Ryker Lake and Rainbow Lake For bass, sunfish, and perch so they are managed under statewide regulations. (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.13(e) and N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.13(n))
- Reduce American Eel baitfish daily limit to 25 to come into compliance with ASMFC and Warmwater regulations. (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.10(a))
- Align the scientific and common names throughout document (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.2)



ENDANGERED & NONGAME LISTING OF SEVERAL FISH SPECIES



Actions

- Alignment between T&E Rule & Fish Code
- Ensure statewide prohibition of take for E/T/SC species (including boundary waters), with demarcation within indigenous species definition. N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.1(h), N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.19(a)1, and N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.20(a)1.



INVASIVE SPECIES REGULATIONS

Existing Regulations

Potentially Dangerous Species: 13 Species
New Jersey statutes prohibit the possession or release of live, potentially dangerous animals including fish.

Actions

- Freshwater Drum to Potentially Dangerous Species (found in Delaware River in recent years)
N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.2
- Add “all catfish species” to the species that are allowed to be taken with a bow. This allows the invasive Blue Catfish to be taken, without concern for accidentally shooting a Channel, White, or Bullhead. N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.15



PROPOSED CHANGES TO SNAPPING TURTLE HARVEST REGULATIONS

N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.2



Commercial Harvest

- ▶ Limit new commercial entry to permittees who have reported take of at least 1 turtle between 1/1/20 through 12/31/25
- ▶ Institute daily limit of 10 and annual harvest limit of 250 per commercial permittee

Commercial & Recreational Harvest

- ▶ Drop early harvest window of April 1- May 15 and retain July 15 – October 31.
 - ▶ Better protection of breeding period and early nesting season.
 - ▶ 156 to 108 days
- ▶ 13-inch carapace measurement is curved carapace (vs straight-line)
 - ▶ Easier to measure in field
- ▶ Harvest intended only for personal consumption, not to keep for personal possession, i.e., pet turtle.

Questions ?



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