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PROPOSED RULEMAKING

FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

[58 PA. CODE CH. 65]

Fishing; Special Fishing Regulations

[51 Pa.B. 5683]

[Saturday, September 4, 2021]

The Fish and Boat Commission (Commission) proposes to amend Chapter 65 (relating to special fishing regulations). The Commission is publishing this proposed rulemaking under the authority of 30 Pa.C.S. (relating to Fish and Boat Code) (code). The proposed additions update the harvest requirements relating to all-tackle trophy trout slot limit and artificial lures only trout slot limit regulations.

A. *Effective Date*

This proposed rulemaking, if approved on final-form rulemaking, will go into effect upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

B. *Contact Person*

For further information on this proposed rulemaking, contact Wayne Melnick, Esq., P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, (717) 705-7810. This proposed rulemaking is available on the Commission's web site at www.fishandboat.com.

C. *Statutory Authority*

The proposed addition of §§ 65.4c and 65.4d (relating to all-tackle trout slot limit; and artificial lures only trout slot limit) are published under the statutory authority of section 2102(a) of the code (relating to rules and regulations).

D. *Purpose and Background*

The specific purpose and background of the proposed amendments are described in more detail under the summary of proposal.

E. *Summary of Proposal*

To address landowner and angler feedback, increase the abundance of large wild brown trout in the population, and provide the opportunity to use all tackle types and harvest some trout, a new miscellaneous special regulation for slot limit was added to § 65.24 (relating to miscellaneous special regulations) was established on Penns Creek, Section 03, beginning January 1, 2014. The slot limit regulation allows for year-round fishing, use of all tackle types, and the harvest of two trout per day that are at least 7 inches but less than 12 inches in length, from the opening day of trout season through Labor Day, with no harvest permitted the remainder of the year.

Penns Creek, Section 03, provided a unique opportunity to evaluate a new special regulation on a productive limestone stream. The Penns Creek trout population was monitored before and after implementation of the slot limit regulation. Results of the monitoring revealed a substantial increase in the electrofishing catch rates of larger brown trout (greater than or equal to 16 inches in length) during the slot limit regulation implementation period (2014—2019). These results suggest that the slot limit regulation likely played an important role in the increased electrofishing catch of large brown trout in Section 03. In addition to fishery independent monitoring, Commission staff conducted an angler use, harvest and opinion survey to evaluate the social aspects of the regulation change and estimate angler harvest in 2019. Results documented low harvest of trout during the survey and high angler support for continuance of the slot limit regulation. Despite low angler harvest under the current slot limit regulation, this regulation provides the opportunity for anglers to harvest intermediate-sized trout if desired, which was an important social consideration when the regulation was originally implemented.

Given the success of the experimental slot limit regulation program on Penns Creek, Section 03, and potential opportunities to utilize this regulation at other suitable wild trout waters in the future, Commission staff recommend that the Commission establish a new special regulation program to be known as trout slot limit. The trout slot limit program will have two subprograms: all-tackle trout slot limit and artificial lures only trout slot limit. These subprograms will provide the Commission with the ability to select the most appropriate tackle option to achieve biological and social objectives for each water considered for inclusion in the program and provide an opportunity to evaluate the effects of different terminal tackle types.

The Commission proposes that §§ 65.4c and 65.4d be added to read as set forth in Annex A.

F. *Paperwork*

This proposed rulemaking will not increase paperwork and will not create new paperwork requirements.

G. *Fiscal Impact*

This proposed rulemaking will have no adverse fiscal impact on the Commonwealth or its political subdivisions.

H. *Public Comments*

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments, objections or suggestions about this proposed rulemaking to the Executive Director, Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, within 30 days after publication of this notice in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. Comments submitted by facsimile will not be accepted.

Comments also may be submitted electronically by completing the form at www.fishandboat.com/regcomments. If an acknowledgment of electronic comments is not received by the sender within 2 working days, the comments should be retransmitted to ensure receipt. Electronic comments submitted in any other manner will not be accepted.

TIMOTHY D. SCHAEFFER,
Executive Director

Fiscal Note: 48A-317. No fiscal impact; (8) recommends adoption.

Annex A

TITLE 58. RECREATION

PART II. FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

Subpart B. FISHING

CHAPTER 65. SPECIAL FISHING REGULATIONS

(*Editor's Note:* The following sections are proposed to be added and are printed in regular type to enhance readability.)

§ 65.4c. All-tackle trout slot limit.

(a) The Executive Director, with the approval of the Commission, may designate waters as all-tackle trout slot limit. The designation of waters as all-tackle trout slot limit shall be effective when the waters are so posted after publication of a notice of such designation in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

(b) It is unlawful to fish in designated and posted all-tackle trout slot limit areas except in compliance with the following requirements.

(1) Open to fishing year-round.

(2) All tackle types are permitted.

(3) From 8 a.m. on the opening day of the regular season for trout through Labor Day, the daily creel limit of trout is two (combined species). Trout must be at least 7 inches but less than 12 inches in length to be killed or possessed.

(4) From the day after Labor Day until 8 a.m. on the opening day of the regular season for trout, no trout may be killed or possessed.

(5) A current trout permit is required.

(c) This section applies to trout only. Inland regulations apply to all other species.

§ 65.4d. Artificial lures only trout slot limit.

(a) The Executive Director, with the approval of the Commission, may designate waters as artificial lures only trout slot limit. The designation of waters as artificial lures only trout slot limit shall be effective when the waters are so posted after publication of a notice of the designation in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

(b) It is unlawful to fish in designated and posted artificial lures only trout slot limit areas except in compliance with the following requirements.

(1) Open to fishing year-round.

(2) Fishing may be done with artificial lures only; constructed of metal, plastic, rubber or wood; or with flies and streamers constructed of natural or synthetic materials. Lures may be used with spinning or fly-fishing gear. Use or possession of other lures or substances is prohibited.

(3) From 8 a.m. on the opening day of the regular season for trout through Labor Day, the daily creel limit of trout is two (combined species). Trout must be at least 7 inches but less than 12 inches in length to be killed or possessed.

(4) From the day after Labor Day until 8 a.m. on the opening day of the regular season for trout, no trout may be killed or possessed.

(5) Taking of baitfish or fishbait is prohibited.

(6) A current trout permit is required.

(c) Notwithstanding the requirements of this section, an angler in a boat may possess bait and fish caught in compliance with the seasons, sizes and creel limits in effect for the water from which taken, provided that the boat angler floats through the artificial lures only trout slot limit area without stopping or engaging in the act of fishing or the boat angler puts in or takes out his boat at an access point within the artificial lures only trout slot limit area.

[Pa.B. Doc. No. 21-1465. Filed for public inspection September 3, 2021, 9:00 a.m.]

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Top

Bottom