



## Where Did All the Fish Go?

It may seem as if all the fish must be gone when you haven't caught anything or had a bite. The Commission can't make sure the fish bite every time you go fishing. But we can do our best to make sure fish are there for you to catch. One way is with fishing regulations such as minimum sizes, seasons and creel limits.

## Minimum Sizes

Can you name any fish that have minimum sizes? That is, they must be a certain length before you can keep them. Do you know how these regulations work to provide good fishing?

Minimum sizes work in several ways. The length of a species might be set to protect it until it has spawned at least once. In some waters, it's important to make sure there are enough young fish to replace the older, bigger fish anglers are keeping. The more adults that spawn, the more likely it is that there will be young fish.

Sometimes anglers want fish of a certain length. The size on Trophy Trout water is set at 14 inches. The water can grow big fish, so the size is set high enough to increase anglers' chances of hooking a trophy.

Minimum sizes can also keep anglers from taking too many fish. For example, an imaginary lake has a population of fish—let's say it's 100. Of course, we know that there are likely more than 100 fish in the water, but the arithmetic is easier with this example. Suppose only 10 fish are 15 inches or longer. If the minimum size is set at 15 inches, it limits the number of fish anglers can take home, leaving the other 90 to grow and reproduce. So while the creel limit could be set high, the minimum size would limit the number of fish anglers could take.

## Seasons

Seasons identify when fish can be kept. Seasons are often closed when species are spawning. The length of the season can also limit the number of fish kept and caught. Sometimes the creel limit changes during the season. From the opening day of trout season until Labor Day, the creel limit for trout is five. From Labor Day until the end of February, the limit is three.

The Commission considers many factors before creating a regulation or making changes to current ones. Information about the fish and its population are analyzed. Angler opinion is also important.

Make sure you know the regulations for the waterway you are fishing. Following the regulations is one way that anglers help to protect good fishing!

## Fish Season

## Creel Limits

A creel limit sets the number of fish you can keep each day. Creel limits are often established to ensure that a waterway doesn't get overfished. But often, minimum sizes are more effective at limiting harvest (see "Minimum Sizes," left).