

Notice  
Temporary Changes to Fishing Regulations

58 Pa. Code §61.2  
Delaware River, West Branch Delaware River and River Estuary

Striped Bass

The Executive Director of the Fish and Boat Commission (Commission), acting under the authority of 58 Pa. Code §65.25 (relating to temporary changes to fishing regulations), has taken immediate action to amend § 61.2 (relating to Delaware River, West Branch Delaware River and River Estuary). Specifically, the Executive Director has amended this section to decrease the creel limit for striped bass in the River Estuary (from the Pennsylvania line upstream to Calhoun Street Bridge) during the periods, January 1 through March 31 and June 1 through December 31, to one fish and to change the slot limit during the period, April 1 through May 31, to 21 to 25 inches. The Executive Director also has amended the section to decrease the creel limit for striped bass in the Delaware River (from the Calhoun Street Bridge upstream) to one fish. This action is being taken to meet the requirements of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC).

ASMFC's management plan for striped bass calls for management actions when the coast-wide spawning stock biomass (SSB) or fishing mortality rates reach thresholds set within the management plan. The SSB threshold is 127 million pounds, and the current SSB is just above this at 128 million pounds. At the current fishing mortality rates, there is concern that the SSB will fall below the threshold in the near future. In addition to these concerns, recruitment of young fish has been relatively low in many of the years since 2004. In response to these concerns, the ASFMC Striped Bass Management Board, which includes the Commonwealth as a member, has directed all coastal states to reduce fishing mortality rates by 25% beginning in 2015. The amendments to § 61.2 are designed to meet this objective.

To address the coast-wide regulation directed by the ASMFC, the Commission's Executive Director has taken immediate action to make the following modifications to fishing regulation:

§ 61.2. Delaware River, West Branch Delaware River and River Estuary.

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(d) The following seasons, sizes and creel limits apply to the Delaware River, West Branch Delaware River and Delaware River tributaries, from the mouths of the tributaries upstream to the limit of the tidal influence and the Lehigh River from its mouth upstream to the first dam in Easton, Pennsylvania:

<i>SPECIES</i>	<i>SEASONS</i>	<i>MINIMUM SIZE</i>	<i>DAILY LIMIT</i>
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STRIPED BASS and HYBRID STRIPED BASS	From Pennsylvania line upstream to Calhoun Street Bridge: January 1 until March 31 and June 1 until December 31	28 inches	<u>1</u>
	April 1 through May 31	[20]21 to [26] 25 inches	2
	From Calhoun Street Bridge upstream: open year-round	28 inches	<u>1</u>
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The Executive Director has found that this action is necessary and appropriate for the management of fish and to conserve and preserve fishing opportunities. The temporary modifications will go into effect on March 1, 2015 and will remain in effect until the Commission, by appropriate action, amends § 61.2. At its meeting on May 5, 2015, the Commission will consider the publication of a notice of proposed rulemaking containing the proposed amendments and soliciting public comments for a period of 30 days.

FOR THE PENNSYLVANIA FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION:

John A. Arway  
Executive Director