

# Why Do We Have Fishing Regulations?

Pennsylvania law states that people age 16 and over must have a current fishing license to fish (unless otherwise exempted). In addition to this law and other laws related to fishing, PFBC establishes fishing **regulations**. These are the basic rules that you must follow when you fish. Some of these regulations specify what, when and the size of the fish you may keep or **harvest**.

## Seasons

Regulations that identify when you may harvest fish are called seasons. Some fish species may always be no-harvest; they have no **open season**. Other species have an open season, and that is when you may keep them to eat. The time when you cannot keep these species is called the **closed season**. Species caught during their closed season must be released immediately unharmed. In some cases, closed seasons are in place to protect fish populations. Often the closed season is during the **spawning** period.



## Minimum

**Minimum sizes** are often in place to protect **juvenile** fish. Minimum sizes are set to allow fish to grow and become reproducing adults. Nearly all gamefish have a minimum size regulation. Fish such as bass, Walleyes, Northern Pike and Muskellunge take longer to become adults. The minimum size for these species is based on the length of a 3- or 4-year old fish. Other species, including Bluegills, Yellow Perch and crappies spawn at a younger age and in large numbers. These fish don't have a minimum size on most waters.

## Creel Limits

Daily **creel limits** are established to keep people from harvesting too many fish. Limits help to ensure that there are enough fish to catch in the future. Harvesting too many fish can greatly reduce the **population** of that species. Fish like Muskellunge have lower **creel limits**, because they grow slowly and have few offspring. Panfish have higher creel limits, because there are more of them, and they grow fast.



## The Off-Season

Professional sports take time off during the year, and this is called the off-season. Some anglers take time off too, especially during the winter months. Some anglers brave the cold and enjoy catching fish through the ice or fishing their favorite river or stream. Others use this time to make repairs, tie flies, build rods, visit sports shows or catch-up on their fishing-related reading.



## Special Regulations

The Commission often sets special regulations to enhance fishing opportunities or create a unique experience. Some special regulations are set to provide anglers the opportunity to catch trophy or larger fish. That species has a larger minimum size and a smaller creel limit on those waters. There are also waters where anglers can only use certain types of fishing gear. In these areas, anglers are only permitted to fly fish or use artificial lures.

For current regulations and information, see the *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary*. You can view an online version at [www.fishinpa.com/](http://www.fishinpa.com/) or on the Commission's website at [www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com).

## No Open Season

Threatened or endangered species have no open season. The same is true of species that the Commission and others are working to restore, such as American Shad in the Susquehanna River. There is no open season on Smallmouth Bass and Largemouth Bass on some sections of the Juniata and Susquehanna rivers. These regulations are in place to protect the remaining population.