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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LANSING

REBECCA A. HUMPHRIES
DIRECTOR

September 17, 2007

TO: Rebecca A. Humphries, Director

INFORMATION: Natural Resources Commission

SUBJECT: Statewide Coolwater Regulations for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Walleye, Muskellunge, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish and Yellow Perch (FO-215) – FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, authorizes the Director to provide for better protection and preservation of fish, game, and birds.

Discussion and Background:

We are proposing one change to this order. Currently, the fishing season for walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge in Michigan's Upper Peninsula closes on the last day in February. Based on data from the Lower Peninsula, where the walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge fishing season is open through March 15, angler harvest of these two species in the first two weeks of March is low relative to the remainder of the year.

The most applicable data from the Upper Peninsula that can be used to predict the effects of an extended season are the harvest of walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge during February, as this may give an indication of the harvest that may occur in the first two weeks of March. Based on reward tag returns in seven Upper Peninsula lakes surveyed from 2001 to 2005, 2.0% of the annual walleye harvest and 4.5% of the northern pike harvest occurred during February. Based on 31 muskellunge tagged in three Upper Peninsula lakes, one of five tag returns was caught in early February; however this fish died upon release and was not voluntarily harvested.

Given the average annual exploitation rates (15-20% for walleye and 20-25% for northern pike) for lakes surveyed statewide from 2001-2005, there is, in our opinion, a buffer for additional harvest of walleye and northern pike in most lakes. This is especially true given that the statewide minimum length limits for walleye and northern pike independently allow for significant protection of these species. For muskellunge, given their high minimum size limit and low harvest rate, it is unlikely that extending the season two weeks in the winter will have

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any effect on the populations.

Extending the fishing season for approximately two weeks in the Upper Peninsula will increase angling opportunities without negatively impacting walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge populations. Additionally, this change would simplify regulations in that walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge seasons would close on the same date for the entire state.

Recommendation:

This order is being submitted for information at the October, 2007, Natural Resources Commission Meeting. This item appeared on the Department's October 1, 2007, calendar and is eligible for approval on November 8, 2007.

Kelley D. Smith, Chief
Fisheries Division

Rodney Stokes, Acting Chief
Law Enforcement Division

Douglas A. Reeves, Acting Chief
Wildlife Division

Lynne M. Boyd, Chief
Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division

David E. Freed, Chief
Land and Facilities

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division

Arminda S. Koch
Resource Management Deputy

I approve the staff recommendation.

Rebecca A. Humphries
Director

_____
Date Approved

**FO-215.08**

# ORDER

(Under the authority of Act 451of the Public Acts of 1994, as amended)

## STATEWIDE COOLWATER REGULATIONS
## Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Walleye, Muskellunge, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, and Yellow Perch

Under the authority of sections 41101 through 41105 of Act 451 of the Public Acts of 1994, as amended, being sections 324.41101 through 324.41105 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, the Director of the Department of Natural Resources on November 8, 2007, ordered that for a period of five years the statewide size limits, possession limits and seasons on all state waters shall be as listed below, except as otherwise ordered:

**STATEWIDE SIZE and POSSESSION LIMITS:** (except as otherwise provided)

| SPECIES | MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT | POSSESSION LIMIT |
|---|---|---|
| Largemouth bass*<br>Smallmouth bass* | 14 inches | 5 in combination* |
| Walleye* | 15 inches** | |
| Northern pike* | 24 inches | |
| Flathead catfish* | 15 inches | |
| Muskellunge | 42 inches | 1 |
| Channel catfish | 12 inches | 10 |
| Yellow perch | No size limit | 50 |

* The possession limit for these species is 5 fish singly or in any combination, except as follows:

a. St. Clair River (beginning at the Ft. Gratiot Light) and Lake St. Clair: one (1) additional walleye may be taken from the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair.

b. Little Bay de Noc: no more than one (1) walleye over 23" may be possessed from Little Bay de Noc north of a line drawn from Peninsula Point Lighthouse to the mouth of the Ford River.

c. Michigan waters of Green Bay: from the mouth of the Menominee River northward to the latitudinal line (45 degrees/15 minutes) located approximately 3 miles south of Rochereau Point: from March 2 - Friday before 1st Saturday in May the daily possession limit is 1 walleye and from the 1st Saturday in May – March 1 the daily possession limit is 5 walleye.

d. St. Joseph River: no more than one (1) walleye over 23" may be possessed from the St. Joseph River below Berrien Springs Dam to the mouth at St. Joseph/Benton Harbor.

e. No more than two (2) of which may be northern pike, except the limit is five fish on those waters where northern pike may be taken at any size (refer to FO-214).

** The minimum size limit on Lake St. Clair and St. Clair River shall be 13 inches.

**STATEWIDE SEASONS** (except as otherwise provided) – A person shall not take, catch, or kill or attempt to take, catch or kill any of the fish of the species named below except during the open seasons specified below:

1. Largemouth bass and smallmouth bass

   a. Lake St. Clair, St. Clair River, Detroit River: From the last Sat. in April to the Fri. before the 3rd Sat. in June, catch and immediate release fishing is permitted. All bass caught during this period must be immediately returned to the water. The open possession season is 3rd Sat. in June to December 31;

   b. On Lake Michigan, within one-half mile of the following islands of the Beaver Island Archipelago, Beaver, Garden, High and Hog, Charlevoix County: The open season is July 1 to December 31. Catch and immediate release fishing is not permitted on these waters prior to the open season;

   c. All other waters: From the last Sat. in April to the Fri. before Memorial Day on all waters in the Lower Peninsula (including Lower Peninsula Great Lakes waters), and from May 15 to Fri. before Memorial Day on all waters in the Upper Peninsula (including Upper Peninsula Great Lakes waters), catch and immediate release fishing is permitted. Bass caught during this period must be immediately returned to the water. The open possession season is Sat. before Memorial Day to December 31.

2. Walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge (including tiger muskellunge).

   a. In all Upper Peninsula waters including the surrounding Great Lakes and connecting waters not otherwise closed to fishing the open season shall be from May 15 to March 15, except:

      For walleye only and only in waters of Green Bay, the following regulations apply to the harvest of walleye taken from Michigan waters of Green Bay from the mouth of the Menominee River northward to the latitudinal line (45 degrees/15 minutes) located approximately 3 miles south of Rochereau Point: from March 2 - Friday before 1st Saturday in May the daily possession limit is 1 walleye and from the 1st Saturday in May – March 1 the daily possession limit is 5 walleye.

   b. In all Lower Peninsula inland waters not otherwise closed to fishing the open season shall be from the last Sat. in April to March 15.

   c. In all Lower Peninsula Great Lakes and connecting waters not otherwise closed to fishing, the open season shall be year around, except: the open season for muskellunge in Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers shall be from the first Sat. in June to December 15.

3. Flathead and channel catfish: Open all year.

4. Yellow perch: Open all year.

This order is assigned number FO-215.08 and is entitled "Statewide Coolwater Regulations for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Walleye, Muskellunge, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, and Yellow Perch."

This order supersedes the order entitled "Statewide Coolwater Regulations for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Walleye, Muskellunge, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, and Yellow Perch" effective April 1, 2006, and assigned number FO-215.06.

This order shall take effect on April 1, 2008, and shall remain effective through March 31, 2013.

Issued on the _____ day of _____, 2007.

Rebecca A. Humphries
Director

The Natural Resources Commission has reviewed this order.

Keith J. Charters
Chairperson

Teresa Gloden
Executive Secretary