



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



KEITH CREAUGH
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: February 17, 2015

MEMORANDUM TO THE DIRECTOR

Subject: Fisheries Order 249.15
Crayfish Regulations
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Authority:

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

Discussion and Background:

Michigan's aquatic ecosystems are experiencing significant consequences from aquatic invasive species (AIS) that are already present, and the state's waters are continually threatened by new invasions. The introduction of AIS into Michigan's Great Lakes and inland waters is a source of biological pollution that negatively impact natural resources, human health, recreational opportunities, and various other human values throughout the region. AIS compete with native species for food and habitat, and can directly or indirectly harm or displace native species, degrade habitat, and alter food webs and energy flow.

Rusty crayfish are currently listed under Part 413 as a restricted species and are widespread in Michigan. Surveys conducted by DNR Fisheries Division reveal that the rusty crayfish is established within all four of Michigan's Great Lakes Basins. Section 41302 of NREPA defines restricted species and allows the department to issue an order setting forth the conditions under which restricted species may be harvested, possessed, and transported. Crayfish trapping is a growing activity in Michigan and the Department has received significant input from the public requesting that rusty crayfish be possessed for consumption. Allowing for the limited possession of rusty crayfish may decrease the desire to import the highly invasive red swamp crayfish for consumptive purposes such as crayfish boils. Furthermore, the public can play an important role in the fight to stop the spread AIS in Michigan. The Department recommends modifying the regulations for rusty crayfish to allow for their limited possession for purpose of promptly destroying the organism (e.g. consumption, fertilizer, or trash).

Issue Pros and Cons?

Rusty crayfish have become a dominant crayfish species in Michigan. Several areas of the state are invaded by rusty crayfish and native crayfish species have been displaced. This regulation change could increase recreational crayfish trapping activities and would allow the public to help combat an invasive species problem while allowing for the benefits through harvest and consumption. Crayfish trapping and boils are quite popular and a growing activity in Michigan. Michigan has abundant crayfish populations that are generally inundated with rusty crayfish. This regulation change will allow the public to take advantage of an available resource without causing harm.

Neighboring States

Crayfish regulations vary across the country. Many states have very strict crayfish regulations to control the spread on invasive species such as the red swamp crayfish. More recently, states such as Wisconsin have identified the population abundances of invasive rusty crayfish and have allowed for their possession for destruction purposes only.

Biological

Unknown but increasing the harvest on rusty crayfish may reduce their negative environmental impact and allow for native populations of crayfish to rebuild.

Social

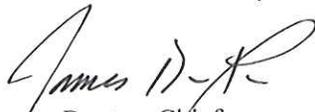
There is a very active group of anglers who engage in crayfish trapping. These anglers have repeatedly contacted the Department to request changes to our crayfish regulations to allow for the harvest of rusty crayfish for consumptive purposes.

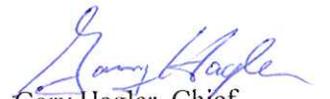
Economic

AIS have significant economic effects on waterfront property values, tourism, utilities, and other industries to an estimated sum exceeding \$100 million annually in Michigan. Allowing for the possession of rusty crayfish for consumptive purposes may achieve a modest increase in fishing license sales for the purposes of harvesting these AIS while helping the Department control their spread.

Recommendation:

This order is being submitted for information and consideration. This item appears on the Department's March calendar and may be eligible for approval on April 9, 2015.


James Dexter, Chief
Fisheries Division


Gary Hagler, Chief
Law Enforcement Division


Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief
Wildlife Division


Bill O'Neil, Chief
Forest Resources Division


Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division


William E. Moritz, Ph.D.
Natural Resources Deputy

FISHERIES ORDER

Crayfish Regulations Order 249.15

By authority conferred on the Natural Resources Commission and the Department of Natural Resources by Part 487 of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.48701 to 324.48740, it is ordered that effective April 9, 2015, the following section(s) of the Fisheries Order shall read as follows:

The following crayfish regulations shall be established:

General Crayfish Harvest Regulations

- 1) No minimum size limit.
- 2) ~~No possession limit on possession.~~
- 3) Native crayfish may be harvested in all waters as long as the water body is open to fishing. In designated trout waters, crayfish may only be taken during the fishing season for trout.
- 4) Anglers may use traps, nets, hook-and-line or hands to harvest crayfish. All crayfish traps must bear the owner's name and address.

Special Crayfish Restrictions include the following:

- 1) Crayfish may not be possessed or used for bait, whether alive or dead, on Michigan-Wisconsin boundary waters.
- 2) Crayfish species not native to Michigan waters, ~~which include (but is not limited to) red swamp crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*) and rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*),~~ may not be possessed live or used alive for bait, ~~whether alive or dead,~~ on any waters of this state whether those waters are public or private.
 - i) A person is not considered to possess a live crayfish if the crayfish was obtained from the environment and the person only possesses the live crayfish at the specific location at which it was obtained from the environment.
 - ~~ii) A person is not considered to possess a live crayfish if the possession is for the purpose of promptly destroying the crayfish.~~
- 3) For purposes of this section, Michigan's native crayfish are defined as any of the following:
 - a) Calico crayfish (*Orconectes immunis*)
 - b) Northern clearwater crayfish (*Orconectes propinquus*)
 - c) Virile crayfish (*Orconectes virilis*)
 - d) Chimney crayfish (*Cambarus diogenes*)
 - e) Big river crayfish (*Cambarus robustus*)
 - f) Digger crayfish (*Fallicambarus fodiens*)
 - g) White river crayfish (*Procambarus acutus*)

This Order shall be assigned number FO-249.15, and is entitled "Crayfish Regulations."

This Order supersedes the Order entitled "Crayfish Regulations," which became effective April 1, 2014, and is assigned number FO-249.14.

This Order shall take effect immediately upon signature and shall remain in effect until amended/rescinded.

Issued on this 19 day of March, 2015.

Approved as to matters over which the Natural Resources Commission has authority.

John Matonich, Chairman
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Keith Creagh
Director