STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

RODNEY A. STOKES
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: August 15, 2011

MEMORANDUM TO THE DIRECTOR

Information: Natural Resources Commission

Subject: Statewide Coolwater Regulations for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Walleye, Sauger, Muskellunge, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Yellow Perch, Sunfishes, and White Bass (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

Fisheries Order 215 covers the statewide coolwater regulations for smallmouth and largemouth bass, northern pike, muskellunge, catfish, yellow perch, sunfishes, and white bass. The regulations contained in this Order are the general statewide hook-and-line regulations for coolwater species throughout Michigan. We are recommending one change to this Order to reinstate a walleye possession restriction of one (1) walleye 23 inches or over in the daily possession limit for Little Bay de Noc (LBDN).

The primary objective of the proposed change to the current regulation is to encourage reasonable harvest practices and to encourage stewardship of a limited resource. This regulation exception was originally implemented in 1994 and intended to preserve and promote expansion of the spawning stock by protecting large adult walleye in LBDN. Assessment data consistently has shown that this regulation exception is not biologically beneficial and it was removed in 2010.

This regulation has been reassessed at the request of the local angling communities who are very supportive of this regulation and have requested that it be reinstated.

After discussions were held with various local constituent groups in 2010 and 2011, we recognize that the regulation can provide positive social benefit (i.e. promotion of the fishery). These same constituent groups recognize that general angler attitudes of harvest and utilization of large or "memorable" adult walleye are generally different than that towards smaller walleye.

Fisheries Division has received a great deal of feedback regarding the removal of this regulation exception and, after significant discussion with the local angling community, has agreed to propose its reinstatement. The local economic interests also view this regulation exception as a vehicle to promote the walleye fishery for tourism purposes, as the opportunity to harvest a large walleye is not found in many other waters in Michigan which support good walleye populations.

Fisheries Division has discussed this proposal with area stakeholders from the M&M Great Lakes Sport Fishermen, Bays de Noc Great Lakes Sportfishermen, Inc., Bay Area Economic Club, Schoolcraft County Sport Fishing Association, the Upper Peninsula Sportsmen Association, and the Western Upper Peninsula Citizens Advisory Council. With all of these stakeholders, there has been overwhelming support for reinstitution of the proposed regulation exception. Therefore, we are recommending to reinstate the one (1) fish over 23 inches walleye size restriction for Little Bay de Noc, north of a line drawn from Peninsula Point Lighthouse to the mouth of the Ford River in Delta County.

Recommendation

It is our recommendation to reinstate the walleye possession restriction of one (1) walleye 23 inches or over in the daily possession limit for LBDN at the request of the local angling community there. The regulation has been popular with local anglers and their familiarity and support will help reinforce the change back. This regulation change is based solely upon social issues and will not harm the walleye population or diminish the fishing opportunities for our anglers.

This Order is being submitted for information at the September 15, 2011 meeting of the Natural Resources Commission. This Order will be resubmitted for action at the October 13, 2011 meeting of the Natural Resources Commission. This item appeared on the Department's September 2011 calendar, and will be eligible for approval on October 13, 2011.

James L. Dexter, Acting Chief
Fisheries Division

Gary Hagler, Chief
Law Enforcement Division

Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief
Wildlife Division

Lynne M. Boyd, Chief
Forest Management Division

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Recreation Division

Kelley D. Smith, Ph.D.
Acting Natural Resources Deputy

I approve the staff recommendation.

Rodney A. Stokes, Director

Date

ORDER

STATEWIDE COOLWATER REGULATIONS FOR LARGEMOUTH BASS, SMALLMOUTH BASS, NORTHERN PIKE, WALLEYE, MUSKELLUNGE, CHANNEL CATFISH, FLATHEAD CATFISH, YELLOW PERCH, SUNFISHES, AND WHITE BASS

Under the authority of sections 41101 through 41105 and 48721 of 1994 PA 451, as amended, being MCL 324.41101 through 324.41105 and 324.48721, the Director of the Department of Natural Resources on October 13, 2011, ordered that for a period not to exceed five years, the statewide seasons, size limits, and daily possession limits on all state waters shall be as listed below, except as otherwise ordered:

A. STATEWIDE SEASONS

A person shall not take, catch, or kill or attempt to take, catch or kill any of the species of fish named in this Order except during the possession seasons that are specified below for each species of fish named in this Order.

1. Largemouth bass and smallmouth bass
   a. Lake St. Clair, St. Clair River, Detroit River
      i) The possession season shall be the third Saturday in June though December 31.
      ii) Catch-and-immediate-release fishing shall be permitted from the last Saturday in April to the Friday before the third Saturday in June. All bass caught during this period shall be immediately returned to the water.
   b. Lake Michigan within one-half mile of the following islands of the Beaver Island Archipelago – Beaver, Garden, High, and Hog, all in Charlevoix County
      i) The possession season shall be July 1 through December 31.
      ii) Catch-and-immediate-release fishing shall be prohibited on these waters prior to the possession season.
   c. All other waters not otherwise closed to fishing
      i) The possession season shall be the Saturday before Memorial Day through December 31.
      ii) Catch-and-immediate-release fishing shall be permitted from the last Saturday in April to the Friday before Memorial Day on all waters in the Lower Peninsula, including waters of the Great Lakes in the Lower Peninsula. Bass caught during this period shall be immediately returned to the water.
      iii) Catch-and-immediate-release fishing shall be permitted from May 15 to the Friday before Memorial Day on all waters in the Upper Peninsula, including waters of the Great Lakes in the Upper Peninsula. Bass caught during this period shall be immediately returned to the water.
2. Walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge
   a. Michigan's 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
      i) The possession season for walleye shall be open for the entire year.

ii) The possession season for northern pike and muskellunge shall be May 15 through March 15.

b. All other inland, Great Lakes, and connecting waters of the Upper Peninsula not otherwise closed to fishing
   i) The possession season shall be from May 15 through March 15.

c. Inland waters of the Lower Peninsula not otherwise closed to fishing
   i) The possession season shall be from the last Saturday in April through March 15.

d. Lake St. Clair, the St. Clair River, and Detroit River
   i) The possession season for muskellunge shall be the first Saturday in June through December 15.
   ii) The possession season for walleye and northern pike shall be open for the entire year.

e. All other Great Lakes and connecting waters of the Lower Peninsula not otherwise closed to fishing
   i) The possession season shall be open for the entire year.

3. Flathead catfish, channel catfish, yellow perch, sunfishes, and white bass
   a. All waters not otherwise closed to fishing
      i) The possession season shall be open for the entire year.

B. STATEWIDE SIZE LIMITS AND DAILY POSSESSION LIMITS

SPECIES	MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT	DAILY POSSESSION LIMIT
Largemouth bass Smallmouth bass	14 inches	Five (5) in any combination, except no more than two (2) northern pike
Walleye (**See Note 1**)	15 inches, except 13 inches on Lake St. Clair and St. Clair River	
Northern pike	24 inches	
Flathead catfish	15 inches	
Muskellunge	42 inches	One (1)
Channel catfish	12 inches	Ten (10)
Yellow perch	No size limit	Fifty (50)
Sunfishes: Black Crappie Bluegill Green Hybrid Longear Pumpkinseed Redear Rock Bass Warmouth White Crappie	No size limit	Twenty-five (25) in any combination

SPECIES	MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT	DAILY POSSESSION LIMIT
White bass	No size limit	Twenty-five (25) on Great Lakes, Lake St. Clair, St. Marys River, St. Clair River, and Detroit River; Ten (10) on inland waters

Note 1: The following waters have daily possession limits for walleye that differ from the statewide daily possession limit:

1. St. Clair River beginning at the Ft. Gratiot Light and Lake St. Clair:
   a. The daily possession limit may include one (1) additional walleye.

2. **Little Bay de Noc:**
   a. The daily possession limit shall not include more than one (1) walleye 23" or greater from Little Bay de Noc north of a line drawn from Peninsula Point Lighthouse to the mouth of the Ford River in Delta County.

~~2.~~3 Michigan's 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:
   a. March 2 through the Friday before the first Saturday in May the daily possession limit shall be one (1) walleye; and
   b. The first Saturday in May through March 1 the daily possession limit shall be five (5) walleyes.

~~3.~~4 Lake Erie:
   a. April 1 through April 30, 2011 the daily possession limit shall be five (5) walleyes.
   b. Beginning May 1, 2011, the daily possession limit for walleye will be based on Michigan's share of the annual total allowable catch (TAC) for walleye pursuant to the categories in the table below. The TAC is reported in March of each year by the Lake Erie Committee, which is under the aegis of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.
      i) The daily possession limit for walleye will take effect on May 1 of each year and will be in place through April 30 of the following year.
      ii) Prior to May 1 each year, a notice of the daily possession limit will be posted on the DNR's website (www.michigan.gov/dnrfishing), noted in a statewide news release, and noted in printed material that will be made available to the public via various outlets.

If Michigan's share of the annual TAC is	Then the daily possession limit for walleye shall be
greater than 108,364	six (6)
96,958 to 108,364	five (5)
85,551 to 96,957	four (4)
74,144 to 85,550	three (3)
62,737 to– 74,143	two (2)
less than 62,737	one (1)

This Order shall be assigned number FO-215.12, and is entitled "Statewide Coolwater Regulations for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Walleye, Muskellunge, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Yellow Perch, Sunfishes, and White Bass."

This Order supersedes the Order entitled "Statewide Coolwater Regulations for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Walleye, Muskellunge, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Yellow Perch, Sunfishes, and White Bass," which became effective April 1, 2011 and is assigned number FO-215.11.

This Order shall take effect on April 1, 2012. This Order shall remain in effect until March 31, 2017 or until this Order is amended/rescinded, whichever comes first. Although this Order may be reviewed and amended on an annual basis, a review of this Order shall occur no later than August 1, 2016.

Issued on the _____ day of _____, 2011.

Rodney A. Stokes
Director

The Natural Resources Commission has reviewed this Order.

Timothy L. Nichols
Chairperson

Deb Whipple
Executive Secretary