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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
LANSING



KEITH CREAGH  
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: August 12, 2013

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Fisheries Order 249.14  
Crayfish Regulations  
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, provides the Natural Resources Commission the exclusive authority to regulate the taking of fish in this state.

Discussion and Background:

This is a new Order to regulate personal harvest and use of crayfish as bait in Michigan. This Order specifies crayfish regulations which have essentially been in effect for many years while also imposing some new restrictions needed to protect Michigan waters from a new invasive species. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has recently discovered that anglers are purchasing red swamp crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*) from food markets and using them as live bait. It is illegal to import any live species of crayfish into Michigan for commercial bait purposes but importation for consumption is allowed. Previous to this Order, crayfish were virtually unregulated as there were no stated possession limits, size restrictions, seasons or gear limitations listed in law.

Red swamp crayfish are native to the southeastern United States and are considered an invasive species in Michigan. They are dark red in color with raised, bright red spots covering the body and claws. They also have a black, wedge-shaped stripe on the top of the abdomen. They may vary in length between 2 to 5 inches. This species of crayfish is highly invasive, eats a range of food items and can adapt to many habitat types. Red swamp crayfish can survive drought conditions and are known to migrate up to three kilometers in search of habitat. They are very fertile, with females laying up to 600 eggs at a time and reproducing up two times in a year.

Red swamp crayfish were found in two Wisconsin ponds in 2009, proving its ability to live in northern states such as Michigan. These discoveries prompted the Wisconsin DNR to spend over \$100,000 to eradicate them from the ponds post introduction.

The Michigan DNR believes that it is important to address this issue to prevent further spread given the recent reports of red swamp crayfish being used as bait in Michigan and prohibit their use as bait in this state as well as prohibit all live possession on or around the waters of this state. Because of crayfish's ability to move across land between water bodies, these restrictions must be applied on all waters of the state public and private in order to protect state resources from this invasive species.

Recommendation:

This order is being submitted for information and consideration. This item appears on the Department's September 2013 calendar and may be eligible for approval on October 10, 2013.



James Dexter, Chief  
Fisheries Division



Gary Hagler, Chief  
Law Enforcement Division



Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief  
Wildlife Division



Bill O'Neill, 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 249.14

By authority conferred on the Natural Resources Commission by section 48703a of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.48703a, it is ordered that effective April 1, 2014, 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.
- 3) 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 owners name and address.

### Special Crayfish Restrictions

- 1) Red swamp crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*) may not be used live or dead as bait in any waters of this state whether those waters are public or private.
- 2) Red swamp crayfish and rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*) may not be possessed live for any reason on any waters of this state whether those waters are public or private.
- 3) Crayfish may not be possessed or used for bait on Michigan-Wisconsin boundary waters.

This Order shall be assigned number FO-249.14, and is entitled "Crayfish Regulations."

This Order shall take effect on April 1, 2014, and shall remain in effect until amended/rescinded.

Issued on this 12th day of October, 2013.

J. R. Richardson, Chairman  
Natural Resources Commission