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Trout Fishing Regulations for the Pigeon River Country 2011

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Fisheries Division, has taken a hard look at stream trout regulations statewide in the last couple years, in accordance with the public and many special interest groups. Anglers should be aware that some of these changes will impact the rivers and creeks of the Pigeon River Country. Past regulations on trout streams included a suite (7) of regulations ranging from liberal to conservative. Now there is a suite of 4 regulations, along with a Gear Restricted category. There was heavy public interest from groups like Trout Unlimited to include the Pigeon River (and Black River) into that gear restricted category, at least for some river reaches.

A summary of the major changes include:

- The minimum size limits for brook trout (7") and brown trout (8") have been lowered at all Type 1 trout streams (only Type 1).
- The Black River Type 2 water reaches in the past have now been changed to Type 1 water.
- A reach of the Black River that had experimental gear restrictions on it is now a permanent gear restricted reach (Tin Shanty to Town Corner Stairs).
- A reach of the Pigeon River from Elk Hill campground to Pine Grove campground is a gear restricted reach.
- Anglers can now fish for steelhead in a much larger portion of the Pigeon River (see details) outside of the traditional trout dates.

A detailed summary for each major river in the PRC is provided:

Black River

1. Headwaters to Tin Shanty Bridge (Type 1, all tackle types, traditional trout season, 7" brook trout size limit, possession of 5 fish)
2. Tin Shanty to Town Corner Stairs (Gear Restricted, artificials only, bag limit of 2 trout, 10" size limit, fishing all year around but fish can only be kept during the traditional season)
3. Town Corner Stairs to Tower Dam (Type 1, all tackle types, traditional trout season, 7" brook trout size limit, possession of 5 fish)

E Br Black River and all other small streams

1. Entire reach remains Type 1 (all tackle types, traditional trout season, 7" brook trout size limit, possession of 5 fish)

Sturgeon River

1. Headwaters to Wolverine remains Type 1 (all tackle types, traditional trout season, 7" brook trout size limit, 8" brown trout, 10" rainbow trout, possession of 5 fish)

Pigeon River

1. Headwaters to Old Vanderbilt Rd (Type 1, see above)
2. Old Vanderbilt Rd to Elk Hill Horse Campground (Type 2, all tackle types, 5 fish daily possession limit, minimum size is 10" brook trout and rainbow trout, 12" brown trout; traditional trout season fishing only)
3. Elk Hill Horse Campground to Pine Grove Campground (Gear Restricted, artificials only, fishing year around, possession limit for rainbow trout all year, but possession limit for brown and brook trout only in traditional season; daily possession limit of 2 fish but not more than 1 brown trout; minimum size limits of 10" brook and rainbow trout, 12" brown trout)
4. Pine Grove Campground to Mullett Lake (Type 4, all tackle types and open all year; daily possession of 5 fish with no more than 3 larger than 15 inches; rainbow can be possessed all year, but other trout can only be kept during the traditional season; minimum sizes are 8" brook trout, 10" brown and rainbow trout)

Anglers should take advantage of the opportunity to fish year around (especially fall and early spring) on a large portion of the Pigeon River and a smaller reach of the Black. The Pigeon River offers a fair steelhead run and a good reach of river is now fishable outside the traditional season. Brook trout size limits have been reduced and now 7 inch fish can be harvested, they fry up just as good as an 8 incher and don't have to go to waste if hooking mortality is an issue.

Trout Lakes

There are 7 small sinkhole lakes that were open to fishing after years of research by the DNR. They were opened around 2007, but due to their isolation, virtually have no fish in them. Four of the 7 lakes are stocked, including: Section 4, Ford, West Lost, and Hemlock lakes. The remaining three lakes are not stocked currently and include Lost, North and South Twin.

Fishing seasons at each lake parallel the season of the nearby Pigeon River, opening in late April and closing at the end of September. Bait fishing is prohibited however, and only one trout per day is allowed to be harvested, and must be 15 inches or larger. Refer to the regulation booklet. Here is the skinny on each of the four stocked lakes:

Ford Lake and West Lost Lake

- stocked annually with rainbow trout yearlings
- occasionally stocked with adult brook trout or yearling brown trout
- no gas powered motors, suitable for kayaks, canoes, float tubes

Section 4 Lake

- stocked annually with brook trout and occasionally with adult brook trout
- float tubes only allowed, all other boating mechanisms prohibited

Hemlock Lake

- stocked annually with brook trout and occasionally with adult brook trout
- no gas powered motors, suitable for kayaks, canoes, float tubes

Good luck fishing, and if you have any questions, call Tim Cwalinski, DNR Fisheries Biologist, 989-732-3541 Ext. 5072.