



STATE OF MICHIGAN
 DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
 LANSING



GRETCHEN WHITMER
 GOVERNOR

DANIEL EICHINGER
 DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: August 17, 2020
 RESUBMITTED: September 14, 2020

<u>APPROVED</u>
_____, 20
MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
_____ (ASSISTANT TO THE COMMISSION)

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Fisheries Order 226.21
 Hook and Line Restrictions During Walleye Spawning Runs

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, authorizes the Director and the Commission to issue Orders to regulate the taking of fish in the waters of this state.

Discussion and Background:

Fisheries Order 226 governs special fishing regulations in effect to protect walleye during spawning runs. The current regulations have been in effect for decades to reduce angling pressure for walleye during the closed possession season, which overlaps with when spawning occurs. The existing regulations are complex and confusing to anglers and have led to the Department receiving several calls each year from anglers seeking clarity. Fisheries Division and Law Enforcement Division reviewed the regulations and have developed recommended updates to address this confusion. The goal of the review was to reduce the regulatory complexities while also maintaining desired protections for walleye during their closed possession season.

Saginaw Bay has transformed from historically being a limited walleye fishery maintained primarily through annual stocking efforts to currently being a robust self-sustaining walleye population that provides a world-class walleye fishery. Each spring walleye migrate into tributaries of Saginaw Bay to spawn and during this spawning timeframe they are aggregated and susceptible to being caught by anglers. This Order was originally developed as a tool to limit angling methods that had the potential to snag aggregated walleye during their spawning season. As a reminder, fishing activity for other species is lawful during this timeframe, so the restrictions provided a safe alternative for anglers to continue to fish for other species while reducing the potential of incidentally catching walleye during their spawning season. After further consideration, Fisheries and Law Enforcement divisions recommend several changes to alleviate angler confusion related to the current regulations while also maintaining the desired protections for spawning walleye.

The Department recommends that anglers be limited to using only unweighted single-pointed hooks, natural bait, and sinkers or weights, or artificial lures with unweighted single-pointed hooks. As a result, anglers would also be allowed to use angling methods that are commonly used for fish species that have an open fishing season during the closed walleye possession season. These recommendations will increase angler opportunities for species other than walleye while also maintaining the desired protection the valued walleye population that provides the robust recreational fishery in the Saginaw Bay region.

Issue Pros and Cons

The changes remove complex and confusing regulatory restrictions from the Order. The changes will result in more areas where minnows can be used and a wider amount of fishing gear for anglers. No cons have been identified.

Biological

This is not a biological issue and the proposed changes should not have any negative effect on the walleye population.

Social

The proposed changes result in simplified regulations that benefit anglers who are fishing for species other than walleye. The changes will also expand angling opportunities by allowing more gear options to anglers.

Economic

The Department does not expect the proposed changes to have any significant budgetary or personnel implications.

Recommendation:

Relevant Divisions have contributed to the preparation of this Order. This Order was submitted for information on September 10, 2020, at the Natural Resources Commission meeting. This item appeared on the Department's September 1, 2020 calendar and may be eligible for approval on October 8, 2020.



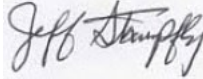
James Dexter, Chief
Fisheries Division



Gary Hagler, Chief
Law Enforcement Division



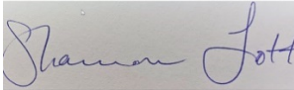
Daniel Kennedy, Acting Chief
Wildlife Division



Jeff Stampfly, Acting Chief
Forest Resources Division



Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division



Shannon Lott
Natural Resources Deputy

I have analyzed and discussed these recommendations with staff and concur as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Daniel Eichinger, Director

Date

FISHERIES ORDER

HOOK AND LINE RESTRICTIONS DURING WALLEYE SPAWNING RUNS Order 226.21

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, ordered on October 8, 2020, the following section(s) of the Fisheries Order shall read effective April 1, 2021, except as otherwise provided:

The following regulations are established on the waters listed:

During the period from March 16 through the Friday before the last Saturday in April:

1. Anglers are limited to using only the following:
 - a) unweighted single-pointed hook, natural bait, and sinkers or weights, or
 - b) artificial lures with unweighted single-pointed hooks.

Bay county: Saginaw river and tributaries, Kawkawlin river downstream from Euclid avenue (T14N, R5E, S5).

Saginaw county: Saginaw, Tittabawassee, Shiawassee, Bad, Cass and Flint rivers and all respective tributaries.

Macomb county Clinton river cut-off channel (T2N, R13E) from spillway weir to the Harper road bridge.

Midland county: Tittabawassee river downstream from Sanford dam site (T15N, R1W, S24) and Salt, Chippewa, and Pine rivers and all respective tributaries.

Genesee county: Flint river downstream from Mott dam and all respective tributaries.

This order shall be assigned number FO-226.21, and is entitled "Hook and Line Restrictions during Walleye Spawning Runs."

This order supersedes the order entitled "Hook and Line Restrictions During Walleye Spawning Runs on the Saginaw River and its Tributaries," which became effective April 1, 2014, and is assigned number FO 226.14.

This Order shall take effect on April 1, 2021 and shall remain in effect until amended/rescinded.

Issued on this 8th day of October, 2020.

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

Carol Moncrieff Rose, Chair
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Daniel Eichinger
Director