



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



M. SCOTT BOWEN
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: July 14, 2025

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Fisheries Order 229.26
Netting Regulations
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Authority:

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

Discussion and Background:

This order governs the use of nets for catching fish in Michigan. The department recommends one change that involves removing the hoop netting season for burbot from December 15th through the end of February on three rivers in the Upper Peninsula. Participants in this fishery must request a permit from the department issued by a local office. The Au Train River (Alger County) from Au Train Lake to mouth; Sturgeon River (Baraga County), from M-38 bridge to mouth; Sturgeon River (Houghton County); and Peshekee River (Marquette County) have been the only waters open to the burbot hoop netting season. The burbot hoop netting season allows fishers to harvest burbot in unlimited quantities in the three rivers while burbot are found in shallow waters during their winter spawning events. Burbot migrate from the deeper waters of Lake Superior to spawn in shallower streams and backwater areas of the tributaries under the ice. Burbot are known to be slow growing and don't reach sexual maturity until four years of age or older. Late maturing species like burbot require greater protection from harvest to preserve the number of spawners in the population. Therefore, eliminating the burbot hoop netting season on these rivers is a proactive approach to protecting the spawning populations of this important native species.

Historical data prior to the 1980s is generally lacking for this netting fishery while participation and harvest has been declining over the past 20 years. Angler participation was at a peak in the 1980s with an average of around 20 anglers harvesting nearly 4,000 pounds of burbot annually. During the 1990s an average of eight anglers participated in the fishery while harvesting 665 pounds annually. From 2000 – 2003, an average of six anglers participated while harvesting 693 pounds of burbot on average. Between 2003 and 2021, burbot netting participation and harvest data was not listed in the database. From 2021 – 2024 an average of two anglers reported harvesting a total of 21 burbot on average. Due to the low participation of this opportunity, the department recommends removing the burbot hoop netting season to allow for greater protection of the burbot population.

This regulation proposal was presented during local Conversations and Coffee meetings in Ishpeming and with the Eastern and Western Upper Peninsula Citizens Advisory Councils. The department also reached out to some anglers who previously obtained burbot hoop netting permits. Each group has been generally supportive of the proposal. Local law enforcement staff have also indicated their support for this proposal.

On a side note, the department is recommending that a five-fish daily possession limit be placed statewide on burbot in fisheries order 252. This will initiate greater protection of burbot throughout Michigan. Michigan currently has no possession limit on burbot which does not provide enough overharvest protection for this important native species.

Issue Pros and Cons

The change will reduce the potential overharvest of an important native species. Anglers will still be able to fish for burbot without the use of hoop nets. The change could result in some limited reduction in angler opportunities, although participation in the netting season was minimal during the past few years.

Biological

Removal of the hoop netting season immediately adds greater protection for burbot spawning stock that will benefit the population over time.


Social

Anglers are supportive of adding greater protection to limited fishery resources. Low participation in hoop netting would be expected to further decrease with the implementation of a five fish limit.

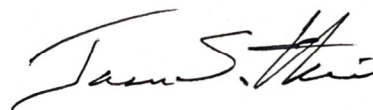
Economic

There are no anticipated significant economic gains or losses expected from the passage of this proposal.

Relevant divisions have contributed to the preparation of this order. This order is being submitted for information and consideration on August 14, 2025, at the Natural Resources Commission meeting. This item will appear on the department's August 5, 2025, calendar and may be eligible for approval on September 11, 2025.



Sara Thompson, Chief
Wildlife Division



Jason S. Haines, Chief
Law Enforcement Division



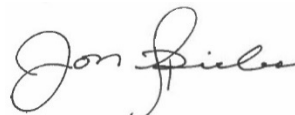
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FISHERIES ORDER

Netting Regulations Order 229.26

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 September 11, 2025, the following section(s) of the fisheries order shall read effective April 1, 2026, except as otherwise provided:

The following netting regulations are established statewide.

SEASON	GEAR	WATERS*	SPECIES**
March 1 – May 31	Hand Net	All Great Lakes, L. St. Clair, St. Clair R., Detroit R., and St. Marys R. including all tributaries to those waters from the mouth to ½ mile upstream (except that Thompson Cr. (Schoolcraft Co.), is closed). See List A for inland streams open to hand netting.	Bowfin, Carp, Goldfish, Gizzard Shad, Longnose Gar, Smelt, Suckers
March 20 – May 31	Dip Net	All Lower Peninsula and Upper Peninsula streams, except Designated Trout Streams. See List B for additional streams closed to dip netting.	Bowfin, Carp, Goldfish, Gizzard Shad, Longnose Gar, Smelt, Suckers
December 15 – end of February	Hoop Net	Peshekee R. (Marquette Co.); Au Train R. (Alger Co.) from Au Train L. to mouth; Sturgeon R. (Baraga Co.) from M-38 bridge to mouth; Sturgeon R. (Houghton Co.).	Burbot
Open for the entire year	Seine, Hand Net, Dip Net	All waters, except Designated Trout Streams and those waters closed to minnow harvest (FO-203).	Minnows
Open for the entire year	Cast Net	Great Lakes, L. St. Clair, St. Clair R., Detroit R., and St. Marys R.	Alewife, Minnows, Smelt, Gizzard Shad

*Review the netting exceptions list below for regulations that differ from those listed in the table above.

**For the purpose of this order the term “suckers” refers to: suckers (longnose, white, northern hog, spotted), redhorse (silver, golden, black, greater, shorthead), buffalo (bigmouth, black), Lake Chubsucker, and Quillback Carpsucker. The term “minnows” refers to small baitfish used as bait: chubs, shiners, dace, stonerollers, sculpins (muddlers), mudminnows, and suckers.

Special Provisions:

1) Hand Net

- a) For the purposes of this Order, "hand net" means a mesh bag of webbing or wire suspended from a circular, oval, or rectangular frame of any size attached to a handle of any length.
- b) Hand nets not over 8 feet square and without sides or walls may be used to take minnows for personal use.
- c) Hand nets may not be fished within 100 feet of a dam.

2) Dip Net

- a) For the purpose of this Order, "dip net" means a square net that is constructed from a piece of webbing of heavy twine, hung on heavy cord or frame so as to be without sides or walls, and suspended from the corners and attached in such a manner that when the net is lifted no part is more than 4 feet below the plane formed by the imaginary lines connecting the corners from which the net is suspended. As used in fishing, it shall be lowered and raised vertically as nearly as possible.
- b) A free permit is required from a DNR office.
- c) Dip nets may not exceed 9 x 9 square feet and may not have sides or walls.
- d) Dip nets may not be erected or fished within 100 feet of a dam.
- e) The name and address of the person setting, using, or having control over the dip net equipment, including frame, boom, supporting members, and temporary buildings, shall be plainly marked in legible English on the dip net equipment or securely fastened to it by a plate or tag. Dip net equipment and a temporary building erected and used that are located on public land or the land of another person shall be removed prior to June 10 of each year unless maintained with proper permission of the landowner. This subsection does not authorize the erection or fishing of a dip net on the land or premises of another person without proper permission from the landowner.

~~3) Hoop Net~~

- ~~a) A free permit is required from a DNR office.~~
- ~~b) Hoop nets may not be fished within 100 feet of a dam.~~
- ~~c) Hoop net size shall not exceed 36 inches in diameter and no longer than seven feet in length.~~

4) Seine

- a) Minnow seines may not exceed 12 feet in length and 4 feet in width.
- b) Seines may not be fished within 100 feet of a dam.

5) Cast Net

- a) Cast nets may not be fished within 100 feet of a dam.

NETTING EXCEPTIONS

LIST A – INLAND WATERS OPEN TO HAND NETTING

The following inland waters are open to use of hand nets from March 1– May 31 for Bowfin, Carp, Goldfish, Gizzard Shad, Longnose Gar, Smelt, and Suckers:

Alger County

Towes Creek

West Branch Whitefish River from Sea Lamprey Barrier (T44N, R21W, S29) downstream 500 feet to posted signs.

Charlevoix County

Lake Charlevoix and tributaries to one-half mile upstream.

Chippewa County

Trout Creek down from Big Trout Lake (T42N, R3E, S31)

Prentiss Creek (T42N, R2E)

Delta County

Days River from sea lamprey barrier downstream for 500 feet.

Rapid River from Rapid River Falls (T24N, R21W, S19) down to County Road (in S15).

Escanaba River from mouth to 1st dam upstream of US-2.

Ford River down from Jaeger Road.

Houghton County

Portage Lake and all tributaries thereto for one-half mile above mouth.

North and South Portage Canal and all tributaries thereto for one-half mile above mouth.

Torch Lake and all tributaries thereto for one-half mile above mouth.

Luce County

Little Two Hearted River from mouth upstream to bridge on County Road 412 (T50N, R9W, S25)

Mackinac County

Doe Creek (T43N, R10W)

Foley Creek down from I-75

Hoban Creek down from State Street

Hudson Creek (T41N, R11W, S8)

Martineau Creek down from I-75

McClouds Creek

Milakokia River, Milakokia Lake down to Heinz Lake

Norton Creek from M-135 down to South Manistique Lake

Nunn's Creek from Highway M -134 to mouth

Pearson's Creek (T42N, R1W and R1E)

Rabbits Back Creek down from Mackinac Trail

Scrums Creek (T42N, R11W, S11)

Taylor Creek (T43N, R12W, S2, 11, 12 and 13)

Manistee County

Little Bear Creek down from Bear Lake to trunkline Highway US-31

Menominee County

Big Cedar River down from mouth of Elwood Creek (T35N, R25W, S11).

LIST B – INLAND STREAMS CLOSED TO DIP NETTING

It shall be unlawful to take or attempt to take any species of fish with dip nets on the following named streams:

Arenac County

Au Gres River from mouth at Saginaw Bay upstream to M-65 (T22N, R5E, S26)
Rifle River from Steve's Road (T19N, R5E, S9) upstream

Benzie County

Cold Creek from mouth at Crystal Lake (T26N, R15W, S26) to source

Grand Traverse County

Unnamed Creek from source at Green Lake (T26N, R12W, S20) upstream to Bridges Lake

Iosco County

Au Gres River from mouth at Saginaw Bay upstream to M-65 (T22N, R5E, S26)

Leelanau County

Houdek Creek from mouth at North Lake Leelanau (T31N, R12W, S35) to source

Monroe County

Huron River from mouth at Lake Erie upstream to Belleville Dam
Stony Creek from mouth at Lake Erie upstream to Finzel Road (T5S, R8E, S23)

Wayne County

Huron River from mouth at Lake Erie upstream to Belleville Dam

This order shall be assigned number FO-229.26 and is entitled "Netting Regulations."

This order supersedes the order entitled "Netting Regulations," which became effective September 15, 2023, and is assigned number FO-229.23.

This order shall take effect April 1, 2026, and shall remain in effect until amended/rescinded.

Issued on this 11th day of September 2025.

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

Rebecca Humphries, Chair
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

M. Scott Bowen
Director