



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
LANSING



DANIEL EICHINGER  
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: August 12, 2019

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Fisheries Order 215.20  
Statewide Warmwater Regulations for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass,  
Northern Pike, Walleye, Muskellunge, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Yellow  
Perch, Sunfishes, and White Bass  
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

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 215 governs statewide warmwater sportfishing regulations. The Department recommends expanding the waters covered by the harvest quota process developed for Lake Erie and used to establish the daily possession limit for walleye. The change would result in adding the Detroit River, Lake St. Clair, and St. Clair River to the annual walleye harvest quota process used for Lake Erie. This change would also result in allowing one additional walleye, for a total of six, to be harvested in the Detroit River from April 1, 2020 through April 30, 2020 as part of the conditions already in effect for Lake Erie next spring. The other waters being added already have a six fish daily possession limit for walleye in effect.

Currently there are discrepancies in the walleye regulations for Lake Erie and the St. Clair – Detroit River System (SCDRS), which includes the Detroit River, Lake St. Clair, and the St. Clair River. The walleye possession limit on the Detroit River aligns with the current statewide daily possession limit of five fish. The St. Clair River (beginning at the Ft. Gratiot Lighthouse) and Lake St. Clair walleye daily possession limit allows one additional walleye (above the statewide limit) for a total of six fish per day. Lake Erie's current daily possession limit for walleye also allows six fish, which is based on Michigan's share of the annual total allowable catch (TAC) for walleye pursuant to the categories in the table listed below in the Order. The TAC is determined in March of each year by the Lake Erie Committee, which is under the aegis of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. The Lake Erie daily possession limit for walleye (as indicated in the Order) takes effect on May 1 of each year and is in place through April 30 of the following year. Prior to May 1 each year, a notice of the daily possession limit is posted on the Department's website ([www.michigan.gov/fishing](http://www.michigan.gov/fishing)), noted in a statewide news release, and available as a pre-recorded message at 888-367-7060. The recommended regulation proposal will simplify walleye possession limits by for the waters referenced above and shift to implementing a new management strategy for determining the walleye daily possession limit in the SCDRS by combining it with Lake Erie for a more unified process.

The biology of walleye in Lake Erie and SCDRS supports harvest strategies for the system as a whole. Lake Erie walleye are highly migratory and walleye from across western Lake Erie move through the Detroit River and up to Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair River. It is estimated that anywhere from 3.6 to 12.6 million walleye move through the St. Clair – Detroit River System (SCDRS) each year. Tagging,

telemetry, and genetic data indicate Lake Erie walleye are the major source of walleye in the SCDRS. Inland tributaries, such as the Clinton River, produce a negligible number in comparison and since at least 2000, the Thames River in Ontario is no longer a major contributor to the Lake St. Clair walleye population due to poor recruitment. Tagging data indicates less than one percent of walleye from Saginaw Bay/Lake Huron move down into Lake St. Clair. The walleye throughout the system are primarily Lake Erie stock that move and contribute to the SCDRS walleye fishery.

Although the daily possession limit will be tied to the Lake Erie TAC, walleye harvested in the SCDRS will not count towards the TAC, just as walleye caught in tributaries in other boundary jurisdictions are not counted toward their TAC. Managers have indicated that adding the SCDRS to the Lake Erie management process will improve their ability to respond to any future population declines by being able to better manage the stock as one population. This change will result in a consistent walleye daily possession limit throughout the connected waterbodies of the SCDRS and Lake Erie which will benefit anglers as well as law enforcement personnel.

#### *Issue Pros and Cons*

There are currently two different walleye possession limits in the Detroit River and the other connected waters of the SCDRS and Lake Erie. Moving to a new process, which manages the stock as one throughout the whole system, will result in a more streamlined management process and reduce confusion among anglers. There are no cons associated with this proposed change.

#### *Biological*

Tagging and genetic information have indicated that the walleye stock is primarily from Lake Erie; therefore, managing the system as one will be more efficient and better align with walleye dynamics in that area. The proposed change will benefit the resource and anglers.

#### *Social*

Anglers are supportive of more consistent regulations and continued protection of the resource. This change will make the walleye possession limit easier for anglers to follow. This will also benefit law enforcement efforts.

#### *Economic*

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

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Recommendation:

Relevant Divisions have contributed to the preparation of this Order. This Order is being submitted for information and consideration. This item appeared on the Department's August 30, 2019 calendar and may be eligible for approval on October 10, 2019.



James Dexter, Chief  
Fisheries Division



Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief  
Wildlife Division

For 

Ronald A. Olson, Chief  
Parks and Recreation Division



Gary Hagler, Chief  
Law Enforcement Division



Debbie Begalle, Chief  
Forest Resources Division



Shannon Hanna  
Natural Resources Deputy



# FISHERIES ORDER

## Statewide Warmwater Regulations for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Walleye, Muskellunge, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Yellow Perch, Sunfishes, and White Bass Order 215.20

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 10, 2019, the following section(s) of the Fisheries Order shall read effective April 1, 2020, as follows:

### A. For the purpose of this Order the following definitions are provided:

- 1) Catch-and-Immediate-Release (CIR): means the act of returning fish immediately to the water without injury and without holding in livewell or like object.
- 2) MH-4: is a Lake Trout management unit which is bounded on the north by a line beginning on the shore on Au Sable Point in Iosco County at Latitude 44°20'N and extending eastward along said latitude to Longitude 083°10'W, then southward along said longitude to Latitude 44°10'N, then eastward along said latitude to Longitude 082°40'W, then southward along said line to Latitude 44°00'N, then westward along said line to shore about 2.6 miles southeast of Point aux Barques Light in Huron County.

The statewide seasons, size limits, and daily possession limits on all state waters shall be as listed below, except as otherwise Ordered:

### B. 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 seasons that are specified below for each species of fish named in this Order.

- 1) Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass:
  - a) CIR fishing shall be permitted all year.
  - b) On Lake St. Clair, St. Clair River, and Detroit River:
    - i) The possession season shall be the third Saturday in June - December 31.
  - c) On Lake Michigan within one-half mile of the following islands of the Beaver Island Archipelago – Beaver, Garden, High, and Hog, Charlevoix County:
    - i) The possession season shall be July 1 - December 31.
  - d) All other waters not otherwise closed to fishing:
    - i) The possession season shall be the Saturday before Memorial Day - December 31.
- 2) Walleye, Northern Pike, and Muskellunge:
  - a) CIR fishing for Muskellunge shall be permitted all year.

- b) An area in the Green Bay portion of Lake Michigan, Menominee County, beginning at the intersection of the north boundary line of Menominee County with the west shoreline of the Bay in Section 3, T36N, R24W or approximate latitude/longitude (45.5505, -87.2637); thence east approximately 8 miles to latitude/longitude (45.5505, -87.101); thence south approximately 10 miles to the intersection with the state boundary at approximate latitude/longitude (45.444, -87.101); thence southwesterly and westerly approximately 36 miles along the state boundary in Green Bay, between the mainland of Michigan and the Door Peninsula of Wisconsin, to the mouth of the Menominee River, thence northeasterly along the shoreline of Green Bay to the point of beginning:
    - i) The possession season for Walleye shall be open for the entire year.
    - ii) The possession season for Northern Pike shall be May 15 - March 15.
    - iii) The possession season for Muskellunge shall be from the first Saturday in June - March 15.
  - c) All other inland, Great Lakes, and connecting waters of the Upper Peninsula not otherwise closed to fishing:
    - i) The possession season for Walleye and Northern Pike shall be from May 15 - March 15.
    - ii) The possession season for Muskellunge shall be from the first Saturday in June - March 15.
  - d) Inland waters of the Lower Peninsula not otherwise closed to fishing:
    - i) The possession season for Walleye and Northern Pike shall be from the last Saturday in April - March 15.
    - ii) The possession season for Muskellunge shall be from the first Saturday in June - March 15.
  - e) Lake St. Clair, the St. Clair River, and Detroit River:
    - i) The possession season for Muskellunge shall be the first Saturday in June - December 31.
    - ii) The possession season for Walleye and Northern Pike shall be open for the entire year.
  - f) All other Great Lakes and connecting waters of the Lower Peninsula not otherwise closed to fishing:
    - i) The possession season for Walleye and Northern Pike shall be open for the entire year.
    - ii) The possession season for Muskellunge shall be from the first Saturday in June - March 15.
- 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.



**C. Statewide Warmwater Regulations; Size and Possession Limits**

Species	Minimum Size Limit	Daily Possession Limit
Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass	14 inches	Five (5) per day in any combination
Walleye (See <b>Note 1</b> )	15 inches	Five (5) per day
Northern Pike (See <b>Note 2</b> )	24 inches	Two (2) per day
Flathead Catfish	15 inches	Five (5) per day
Muskellunge (including Tiger Muskellunge) (See <b>Note 3</b> )	42 inches	One (1) per angling season
Channel Catfish	12 inches	Ten (10) per day
Yellow Perch (See <b>Note 4</b> )	No size limit	Twenty-five (25) per day
Sunfishes: Black Crappie, Bluegill, Green Sunfish, Hybrid Sunfish, Longear Sunfish, Pumpkinseed, Redear, Rock Bass, Warmouth, White Crappie	No size limit	Twenty-five (25) per day in any combination
White Bass	No size limit	Twenty-five (25) per day on Great Lakes, Lake St. Clair, St. Marys River, St. Clair River, and Detroit River;  Ten (10) per day on inland waters

**NOTES**

1. **Walleye** - the following waters have ~~daily possession limits~~ regulations that differ from the statewide ~~daily possession limit~~ regulations:
  - a) St. Clair River beginning at the Ft. Gratiot Light and Lake St. Clair:
    - i) The minimum size limit shall be 13 inches.
    - ~~ii) The daily possession limit may include one (1) additional Walleye.~~
  - b) Lake Michigan waters of Little Bay de Noc: that portion north of a line drawn from Peninsula Point Lighthouse to the mouth of the Bark River in Delta County.
    - i) The daily possession limit shall not include more than one (1) Walleye 23" or greater.
  - c) Lake Michigan waters of Green Bay: An area in the Green Bay portion of Menominee County, beginning at the intersection of latitude 45 degrees 30 minutes north with the west shoreline of the Bay in Section 24, T36N, R24W, thence east approximately 6 miles to the intersection of latitude 45 degrees 30 minutes north with longitude 87 degrees 10 minutes west, thence south approximately 10 miles to the intersection of longitude 87 degrees 10 minutes west with the state boundary, thence southwesterly and westerly approximately 36 miles along the state boundary in Green Bay, between the mainland of Michigan and the Door Peninsula of Wisconsin, to the mouth of the Menominee River, thence northeasterly along the shoreline of Green Bay to the point of beginning:

- i) March 2 - the Friday before the first Saturday in May the daily possession limit shall be one (1) Walleye; and
- ii) The first Saturday in May - March 1 the daily possession limit shall be five (5) Walleyes.
- d) Lake Huron waters of MH-4 including Saginaw Bay and Saginaw River up to Center Road Bridge:
  - i) The minimum size limit for Walleye shall be 13 inches.
  - ii) The daily possession limit for Walleye shall be eight (8).
- e) Lake Erie, Detroit River, Lake St. Clair, and St. Clair River (beginning at the Ft. Gratiot Light):
  - i) 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.
    - (1) 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.
    - (2) Prior to May 1 each year, a notice of the daily possession limit will be posted on the DNR's website ([www.michigan.gov/fishing](http://www.michigan.gov/fishing)) and noted in a statewide news release.

Michigan TAC	Walleye Possession Limit
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)

- 2. **Northern Pike** - the following waters have daily possession limits that differ from the statewide daily possession limit:
  - a) Lake St. Clair, St. Clair River, and Detroit River:
    - i) The daily possession limit for Northern Pike shall be five (5).
- 3. **Muskellunge** – anglers are required to register Muskellunge (including Tiger Muskellunge) harvest within 24 hours online at [www.michigan.gov/fishing](http://www.michigan.gov/fishing).
  - a) Statewide:
    - i) Muskellunge harvest is limited to one (1) Muskellunge per angler per year (April 1 – March 31).
- 4. **Yellow Perch** – the following waters have daily possession limits that differ from the statewide daily possession limit:
  - a) Lake Erie:
    - i) The daily possession limit for Yellow Perch shall be fifty (50).
  - b) Lake Gogebic:
    - i) The daily possession limit for Yellow Perch shall be twenty-five (25), with no more than five (5) Yellow Perch 12 inches or greater.

This Order shall be assigned number FO-215.20, and is titled "Statewide Warmwater 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 titled "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, 2019, and is assigned number FO-215.19.

This Order shall take effect on April 1, 2020, and shall remain in effect until amended/rescinded.

Issued on this 10th day of October, 2019.

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

Vicki J. Pontz, Chair  
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Daniel Eichinger  
Director