

General Regulation Changes

Bowfishing Regulations Expanded to Allow Crossbows

Crossbows may now be used when bowfishing except for Greenwood Lake. For consistency with equipment allowed for hunting, crossbows must have a stock length of at least 25 inches, a minimum draw weight of 75 pounds and a working safety. Crossbows must be uncocked during transport or when not actively fishing. They may not be permanently mounted. All arrows—regardless of the type of device (long, compound or crossbow)—must be tethered. Since New York State does not allow the use of crossbows for either hunting or fishing, crossbows are NOT permitted on Greenwood Lake which lies partly in Passaic County, New Jersey and partly in Orange County, New York.

Bow anglers are permitted to take carp, including bighead, common, grass and silver, eels, flathead catfish, American shad (Delaware River only), gizzard shad, snakeheads, and suckers or hybrids of these species.

In 2009, crossbows, which were previously restricted for use by only handicapped hunters, were permitted for use by all bowhunters in New Jersey. As more states have allowed the use of crossbows, manufacturers have increased the availability of accessories to modify crossbows for bowfishing. Availability of these accessories has resulted in increased interest in the use of crossbows for bowfishing, especially for the physically impaired. **Anglers should be aware that some municipalities ban the discharge of bow and arrow, tethered arrow or not. As such, anglers are strongly urged to check with the waterbody owner and/or individual municipality prior to engaging in bowfishing.**

Striped Bass Size Limit Increased

In accordance with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass, requiring a 25 percent harvest reduction of stock sized striped bass, the size limit for striped bass has been increased from two fish, 28 inches or greater, to one fish at least 28 inches and less than 43 inches in length, and one fish at least 43 inches in length. The size increase was effective for New Jersey marine waters in the spring of 2015. Anglers should be aware that there are differing size limits and seasons for striped bass for each of the three states bordering the Delaware River. Anglers must obey the regulations for the particular state where they land (catch) striped bass.

Due to the difficulty in identifying pure-strain striped bass from hybrid striped bass on waters where the two species are found, regulations regarding length requirements for hybrid striped bass are adjusted to match the pure strain striped bass regulations.

As both striped bass and their hybrids are present in the Raritan River below Duke Island Dam and in the Delaware River, the increased size limit for striped bass will also apply to hybrid striped bass within these waters. Regulations for hybrid striped bass in all other waters remain unchanged.

The existing seasons for striped bass and hybrid striped bass for all waters remains unchanged.

Trout Regulation Changes

Opening Day Set for 2017 to 2020 Trout Seasons

Trout Stocking Season Dates for the 2017 through 2020 trout seasons have been established. Trout season opens at 8 a.m. on all dates listed below.

- April 8, 2017
- April 7, 2018
- April 6, 2019
- April 11, 2020

Trout Stocking Discontinued on One Stream

Beginning in 2016, **Trout Brook**, located in Hackensack, will no longer be stocked with trout. Discontinuing trout stocking in Trout Brook has been under consideration for several years due to low angling interest. No anglers were documented fishing the stream on Opening Day in 2012. The stream was not stocked in 2014 as a result of the furunculosis outbreak at the Pequest Trout Hatchery so no angler counts were conducted.

Trout Stocking Boundaries Extended on Two Waterbodies

Trout stocking boundaries on the **Passaic River** and **Lackatong Creek** have been expanded. Currently trout are stocked at various locations in the Passaic River beginning at White Bridge Road and extending downstream to the Rt. 24 Bridge in Chatham Borough. Due to the current delineation, fishing is prohibited during the pre-season period downstream of White Bridge Road Bridge but not prohibited on the immediate upstream side of the bridge. This change would properly extend the pre-season fishing closure an additional one-quarter mile upstream to the river's confluence with Black Brook.

The current limits for Lackatong Creek, Opdyke Road Bridge to the creek's confluence with the Delaware Raritan Feeder Canal, do not encompass the entire trout stocked section of Lackatong Creek. The upstream boundary has been expanded from Opdyke Road to the Route 12 Bridge. This proposed change will properly identify the creek's upstream boundary and extend the pre-season fishing closure an additional three miles.

Fish and Wildlife's Pequest Trout Hatchery the Sole Source of Trout for Pequest River Drainage

The change is in response to an extensive outbreak of furunculosis, a fish disease caused by the bacterium *Aeromonas salmonicida*, that occurred at the Pequest Trout Hatchery in 2013 and 2014. The bacterium is believed to have been introduced from birds preying on infected trout dwelling outside the confines of the hatchery and then feeding on trout within the hatchery's raceways, thus introducing the infection to the hatchery stock. Ensuring that the Pequest Hatchery is the only source of trout for the **Pequest River Drainage** will reduce the risk

of disease transmission from sources outside the state's control. According to the Fish and Wildlife's Fish Stocking Permit records, two organizations are currently stocking trout within the Pequest River Drainage. A Fish Stocking Permit is required for the introduction of fish into any waterbody, regardless of ownership. For more information on placing fish in any waterbody, see *Yes, You Need a Permit to Stock Fish –Even There!* (page 8), or consult our website at NJFishandWildlife.com.

Trout May No Longer Be Used as Bait Within the Pequest River Drainage

Trout may no longer be used as bait within the **Pequest River Drainage including Furnace and Mountain lakes**. Small trout are purchased as bait by some anglers targeting larger trophy-sized species such as muskellunge. A common practice for some anglers is to keep unused bait trout obtained from outside the Pequest River drainage area in submerged cages between fishing trips or to release them directly into the lakes. This practice can result in a transfer of disease from a private fish culture facility into waters within the Pequest drainage where the state trout hatchery is located. Birds of prey feeding between these waters and the hatchery's nearby raceways can transfer these pathogens into the facility.

Boundary Water Regulation Changes

Reduced Creel Limit for Channel Catfish in the Delaware River

A minimum size limit of 12 inches and a daily limit of five per day has been established for channel catfish in the **Delaware River**. Channel catfish are distributed throughout the Delaware River and are a popular species targeted by anglers. Previously, New Jersey had no minimum size or creel limit. The harsh winter of 2014-15 resulted in extensive ice forming on the river from Trenton through the Delaware Water Gap allowing anglers to target many previously inaccessible areas on the river. The extended ice cover and liberal regulations resulted in unprecedented numbers of channel catfish being harvested by anglers. The event emphasized the need for more stringent regulations. These limits are consistent with current size and creel limits for channel catfish in all other fresh waters in New Jersey.

Reduced Creel Limit for Certain Species on Delaware River

A daily creel limit of 25 is in effect for freshwater fish species in the **Delaware River** that do not have specific daily creel and possession limits ("all other freshwater species"). This change provides protection to species such as pumpkinseed, bluegill, bowfin, brown bullhead, rock bass and white catfish which are routinely caught in the Delaware River plus other non-typical game species. This is consistent with provisions already afforded these species in other waters of the state.

Snapping Turtles

Daily Limit Reduced for Recreational Harvest

The daily limit of snapping turtles allowed to be harvested with a recreational fishing license has been reduced from three to one. Reducing the limit better aligns recreational harvest with personal use. Turtles taken under a recreational fishing license are for personal consumption only and may not be sold.

Season Closures Expanded and Minimum Carapace Length Established

The nesting closure for snapping turtles has been expanded from the former May 1 to June 15, now being **May 15 to June 30** to more closely correspond with the peak nesting period. A hibernating closure of **October 31 to April 1** is also in effect. Snapping turtles are vulnerable to harvest during hibernation and in early spring when they first become active. The closures will help protect the turtles during these particularly susceptible

periods. Turtles may not be taken from land where they are most vulnerable.

A **12-inch minimum carapace length** is established for both recreational and commercial harvest to protect turtles until they reach sexual maturity. Snapping turtles do not reach sexual maturity until 8 to 10 years of age. They grow approximately one inch (shell length) each year. Carapace length is measured in a straight line (not along the curve of the shell) along the midline of the shell at its greatest length.



New Buddy Fishing License* Available for 2016!

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife is rewarding anglers for introducing a “buddy” to freshwater fishing by offering a nearly half-price license to both qualifying anglers!

License	Regular Price	Fishing Buddy Price
Resident Fishing	\$22.50	\$ 11.75
Non-Resident Fishing	\$34.00	\$ 17.50
All-Around Sportsman	\$72.25	\$62.50

Eligibility requires at least one **new angler**:

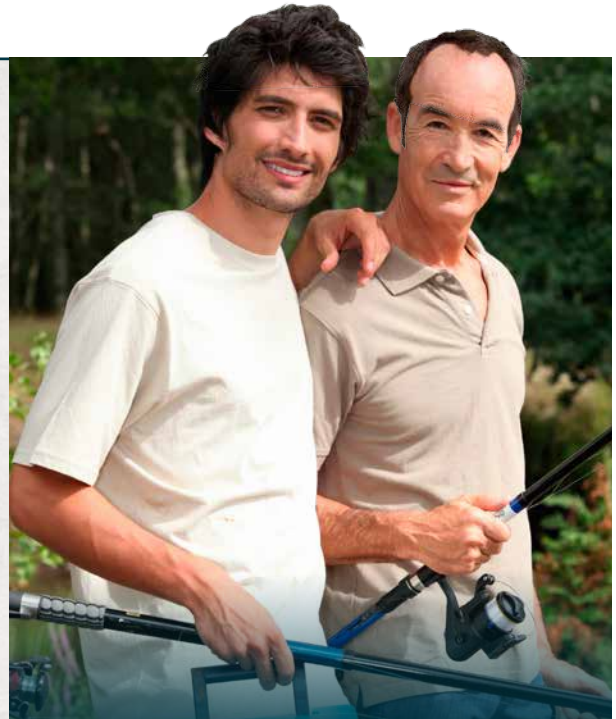
- ✓ A **new angler**, together with an existing angler, each purchase a discounted fishing license.
- ✓ Two new anglers each purchase a discounted fishing license together.

(A new angler is a resident or non-resident who has not purchased a fishing license since 2010.)

For more information, visit www.NJFishandWildlife.com/fishbuddy.htm or scan this QR code:



* **2016 License Fees and Information, page 16.**



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- Discount price is offered to *both* license buyers in the buddy team.
- The buddy fishing license is available **ONLY** at license agents; cannot be purchased online.
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Yes.

A permit to Stock Fish is Required— *Even There*

By Lisa Barno, Chief, Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries



REQUIRED!

A Fish Stocking Permit is required to stock fish anywhere in New Jersey.

Photos: Craig Lemon/NJ Div. Fish and Wildlife

Each year the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries responds to thousands of inquiries relative to the management and use of the state's freshwater aquatic resources. Among the myriad of questions concerning regulations, places to fish, pond management, state stocking programs and water quality concerns, no answer seems to surprise callers more—whether angler, pond owner or member of a private angling club or lake community—than, **“Yes, you need a permit to stock fish.”**

The news is usually met with a slight delay as most assume the call was a mere formality. What possibly could be required? The remainder of the call can take a variety of paths.

“But I own the pond.” **“Yes, you need a permit.”**

“It’s a private waterbody, no one can fish it but members.” **“Yes, you still need a permit.”**

“The pond is open to the public and the state already stocks it.” **“Yes, you still need a permit.”**

“The pond is not connected to anything, it is spring fed.” **“Yes, you still need a stocking permit.”**

Simply stated, if you want to stock fish, in a waterbody, ANY waterbody, you need a Fish Stocking Permit from New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife’s Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries.

Callers often assume this is just another state money-generating gimmick. That notion is quickly dispelled when callers are informed of the \$2 application fee. *Only* \$2. Consider that each application must be logged and reviewed by a state fisheries biologist. That every private hatchery must complete an annual Fish Health History and submit fish health testing results which must be reviewed by our state fish pathologist. Application information is entered into the computer database and the permit printed. The permit is again reviewed by a fisheries biologist, adorned with a postage stamp and mailed. It’s easy to see this is no money-generating scheme.

For the small fee Fish and Wildlife could save ourselves—plus pond owners and managers, alike—a lot of trouble by foregoing the formality. The fact is that a permit isn’t a formality, it’s the law, and for good reason. A stocking permit is a highly valuable tool. Aside from our fish sampling activities statewide, the issuance of a fish stocking permit is, perhaps, one of the most important services provided by the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries not only towards the protection of the state’s aquatic resources but to the benefit of pond owners and anglers.

Keep Out Invasive Species

At its core, a stocking permit prevents the introduction of invasive species. The spread of invasive species such as snakeheads, Asian swamp eels, oriental weatherfish, and the common carp begins with illegal stockings. Hardly a summer goes by that a pacu or piranha doesn’t turn up in a number of ponds somewhere in the state. Fortunately, these tropical species cannot survive New Jersey’s cold temperatures. Recently, a population of *Tilapia* spp. was encountered while sampling a waterbody. This was another illegal introduction. In addition to the potential biological impacts of these species on resident fish populations, controlling them, or at least attempting to, is costly in both time and resources.



Eric Weisgerber

Regardless of size or ownership, the stocking of fish in any water requires a Fish Stocking Permit issued by the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife’s Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. (Turn Mill Pond, Colliers Mills WMA.)

The aquarium trade is a main source of these introductions. They begin as pets, harmless in their glass-encased watery home, but eventually outgrow the interest of their owner—or their tank. Some are banned re-entry into the house with the returning college student. Few want to be responsible for the demise of their pet and so the local park pond appears to be the perfect solution. And so the damage is done with little understanding of the impacts to the state’s fisheries resources.

But It’s Not an Invasive Species

It’s important to note that a species doesn’t have to be truly exotic to negatively impact a fishery. In a state where the majority of highly sought-after game species are non-native it is not always clear what could be the detrimental impact of stocking of one species may have over another. The difference could be huge, not only about a specific waterbody but also how it ties into the larger watershed. For example, largemouth bass are great in numerous ponds throughout the state but within the Pine Barrens it functions like a serious invasive species to native fisheries. This is where a biologist’s experience proves invaluable. A \$2 fee and a single page application allows you to tap into decades of knowledge and experience while protecting the resource.

Protect Your Investment

The habitat requirements of various fish species are far more complex than simply having access to food surrounded by water. Naturally, certain fish species require a coldwater habitat while others flourish in warmwater environments. Some fish need large, deep, open water areas while others do well in shallow waters with vegetated shoreline regions that provide lots of structure (cover).

Those who have purchased fish already know that they can be expensive. Knowing the needs of a particular fish species will protect your stocking investment. Biologists are a wealth of knowledge regarding the specific habitat requirements of various fish species, providing a valuable service during the stocking permit review process to the resident pond owner or lake community member seeking to enhance angling opportunities. Most fish, but not all, require several years to reach an adequate size to provide a return on the investment.

Factors that establish the suitability of a waterbody for a given species of fish may include the size, depth, flow, seasonal temperatures and oxygen levels, habitat, food sources and other variable of the impoundment. Biologists will assess if the planned number of fish to be stocked is suitable for the size of the impoundment. Stocking rates are species-specific but also vary according to the stocking goal, whether that is to restore a fishery (after a dredging or dam repair project, for example) or simply to supplement an existing fisheries.

Seasonal factors such as water temperature dictate that a permit to stock coldwater species such as trout will be issued only for spring or fall stocking. Waterbody owners are reminded that trout won’t survive the warm summer months in most impoundments.

Too Many Fish?

Most waterbodies do not require stocking. The vast majority do not require annual stocking, even waterbodies that are actively fished. Bass, bullheads and the variety of sunfish found throughout New Jersey’s waters reproduce readily and unless some limiting factor—such as low pH, lack of shallow water habitat, low oxygen levels or poor water quality—adversely affects reproduction, additional stockings are not only unnecessary, they could

be a detriment to the fishery by stunting certain populations due to overstocking.

“Bucket” Stocking

Illegal stockings don't always involve the purchase of fish from a private culture facility but could be the movement of fish from one waterbody to another by anglers. These “bucket” stockings can undermine years of management efforts. They have resulted in hybrid striped bass and channel catfish in a waterbody with limited forage. Unfortunately, the channel catfish are now successfully reproducing, adding another stressor to the struggling forage base. The introduction of largemouth bass and the removal by anglers of state-stocked smallmouth bass trumped the management efforts of Lake Audrey, one of the few lakes that was managed for smallmouth bass in South Jersey. These illegal transfers, along with the declining pH level, have greatly affected this unique fishery despite state stocking efforts.

Anglers can also be potential victims in the case of illegal stockings. Several years ago an angler caught a very impressive trout, rivaling the state record, in a large private lake. As events unfolded it was revealed that the trout had been reared to such a size in a private hatchery then stocked just a few weeks prior to being caught. No stocking permit had been obtained, nor would one have been approved, for the stocking of fish near—or in excess of—state record

size. This would have gone against the intent of the state Record Fish Program. Unfortunately, the innocent victim was the angler. He was not involved with the fish being illegally stocked in the lake. He was a nice person who caught a fish-of-a-lifetime, only to have the event tainted by the illegal actions of others before he had even set the hook.

Disease Prevention

Deterring the spread of disease is another important reason to require a Fish Stocking Permit. Under any fish culture condition, including our own Fish and Wildlife hatcheries, fish are reared in close proximity to one another. As fish pathogens are transferred by water an outbreak spreads quickly. Different pathogens pose a threat to different species; the location of a source hatchery may carry concerns of additional pathogens. Linked with the mandatory New Jersey's Fish Stocking Permit is the requirement for fish health testing at private culture facilities.

The requirements are based on the species reared. Every year a fish culture facility must submit a Fish Health History Form reporting the species and their source as well as documenting disease outbreaks within the facility. Accompanying this form is the health testing report on fish from their facility. Fish and Wildlife's fish pathologist reviews this information prior to listing a hatchery as an

approved source for stocking.

Because a hatchery's testing results may change from year to year, the approved species could vary accordingly. In the event of a reported disease outbreak within a fish culture facility, being able to track the distribution of fish from that facility via Fish and Wildlife's stocking records could prove invaluable.

Sign on the Dotted Line

A stocking permit also protects waterbody owners from unwanted stockings as the application, even for publicly owned waters, requires the signature of the waterbody owner. In private lake communities with numerous private residences having varied interests, requiring the owner's signature can be a key to maintaining a cohesive approach to the lake's management. It also assures waterbody owners that the fish being purchased are appropriate for the specific waterbody and that they are sourced from an approved hatchery.

Avoiding Conflict

Stocking applications are also reviewed to ensure that the plan does not conflict with management of a particular waterbody or to connecting waters within the watershed. Illegal trout stocking into impoundments can threaten struggling brook trout populations in connecting waters such as when

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trout are drawn to the adjacent, cooler stream environment as lake temperatures increase in the summer. This does not mean that a permit to stock trout would never be approved in these situations but it does highlight that certain species of trout do pose a threat to the state's dwindling wild brook trout populations. Similar cautions are warranted for other species of concern whose populations have diminished greatly due to land use changes. In addition, for biologists, documenting active fish stocking within a watershed is essential for a more accurate interpretation of results from over 200 fisheries surveys conducted each year statewide.

Keeping Current

Beyond the legal mandate, the merits of obtaining a stocking permit are clear. If you are a member/resident of a club, private lake community or municipality, make sure your organization or community obtains the proper permits. Verify, periodically, that the organization is submitting the most current application form because they are revised periodically. The application and stocking information is available on the Fish and Wildlife's website at <http://njfishandwildlife.com/fishperms.htm#stocking>. Need to lower the water level in your lake? We have a permit for that as well, but that would be another story and another \$2.



Jon Carlucci/NJ Div. Fish and Wildlife

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