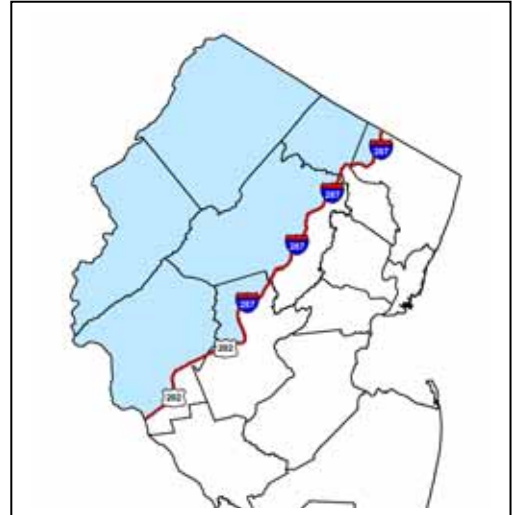


Highlights of the Proposed 2018-2019 Fish Code Amendments include the following:

Trout Regulations

Catch and Release proposed for all Brook Trout within the *Brook Trout Conservation Zone*

Due to growing concern over the plight of New Jersey's state fish, and only native salmonid, it is proposed that all Brook Trout caught within the "Brook Trout Conservation Zone" must be released immediately and unharmed. The zone is delineated by Interstate 287 to the east, Route 202 to the south, the New York state border and up to but not including the Delaware River. The proposed catch and release regulation protects larger Brook Trout that currently may be creel, allowing them to survive, reproduce and perpetuate the species. The Division would also no longer approve the stocking of Brook Trout within the designated zone. Only a handful of organizations are currently stocking Brook Trout within the proposed zone. These organizations have been notified of the proposed change.



In-Season Fishing Closures proposed to be removed for Black and Walkill Rivers

The Black and Walkill Rivers are two of sixteen trout stocked waters closed to fishing from 5am to 5pm on designated week days during the seven-week stocking period that follows opening day. It is proposed to remove the in-season closures so that these streams may be fished immediately the day they are stocked. The trout stocked section of the Black River lies primarily within Hacklebarney State Park and access and parking to this section is nearly a half mile from the water's edge. The inaccessibility of the stream hampers angler use and proper enforcement of the closure.

Stream levels on the Walkill River are often quite low nearing the end of the stocking season and the lower 2.2 miles of the trout stocked section supports only a seasonal fishery for trout. The Division's trout stocking formula requires waters with in-season closures to be stocked each of the seven weeks following opening day. Removing the in-stream closure would allow the Division to better align stocking with the seasonal nature of the fishery, allowing stocking to be limited to the first few weeks after opening day when water temperatures and stream flows are more conducive to the survival of stocked trout. If adopted, stocking frequency for the upper section of the Walkill would occur at a greater frequency than the lower section as it supports a year-round trout fishery.

New *Trout Stocked Wild Brown Trout Managed Waters* Category for Five Streams

The NJDFW's recent three-year effort in reevaluating the state's Wild Trout Streams identified five streams that provide anglers opportunities for both cultured and wild trout. These streams not only receive generous stockings of Rainbow Trout but also support abundant wild Brown Trout populations that reach impressive sizes. To protect the wild Brown Trout while minimizing impacts to cultured trout fishing opportunities these streams are proposed to be regulated as *Trout Stocked Wild Brown Trout Managed Waters*, with a reduced creel and an increased size limit for Brown Trout.

Daily creel limits of 6 per day from opening day till May 31, and 4 per day at all other times, except during pre-season closures, would still apply, however, only two may be Brown Trout. The minimum size is proposed 12 inches for Brown Trout compared to 9-inch limit for Brook and Rainbow Trout. Conservation measures proposed for Brook Trout, catch and release for waters within the designated zone, would apply. No change in current stocking practices would result. Pre-season and in-season fishing closures would remain in effect.

These streams include: Hakhokake Creek (Little York-Mount Pleasant Rd to Delaware River); Lopatcong Creek (Rt. 519 to Delaware River); Pophandusing Creek (entire length); Raritan River, S. Br. just upstream Schooleys Mountain Road to Lake Solitude dam, excluding 2.5 mile catch and release only stretch within Ken Lockwood Gorge WMA); and Saddle River (Lake Street to West Century Rd.)

Trout Stocking Proposed to be Discontinued on Four Waterbodies

Beaver Brook (Hunterdon), Rockaway Creek, S/Br (Hunterdon), and Trout Brook (Sussex) are all small streams for which there is little angling interest and all have reproducing Brown Trout populations. Beaver Brook, which has a more robust Brown Trout population than the other two streams, is proposed to be regulated as a Wild Trout Stream.

Hamilton Fire Company has requested that trout stocking be discontinued at the Hamilton Fire Company Pond. The pond has not been stocked with trout since 2015.

Trout Stocking Boundary Limit Changes Proposed

After careful comparison of the delineated boundaries for all 90 trout stocked sections of streams to current stocking practices, and updated maps, the Division has proposed a number of changes to upstream and downstream boundary limits. Many of the proposed changes are technical in nature and have minimal to anglers. However, several changes do affect the portion of stream for which pre-season and in-season fishing closures apply (see below). Appropriate municipality information, for trout stocked streams and lakes is also proposed to replace unincorporated towns or local references that do not appear on most maps.

| Stream | Upstream Boundary | Downstream Boundary |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Manasquan River | | Allenwood-Lakewood Rd. (Bennetts Bridge) |
| Raritan River S. Br. | source (dam 200 ft above Schooleys Mtn Rd.) | |
| Pequest River | source (Pequest Rd.) | |
| Hohokus Brook | Forest Rd. (Parsons Pond Rd.) | |
| Pascack Creek | Orchard St. (Woodcliff Lake dam) | |
| Saddle River | | Dunkerhood Rd. (West Century Rd.) |
| Rancocas Ck. SW Br. | | Branch St. (Rt. 70) |
| Rahway River W. Br. | | Glen Ave. (Essex St.) |
| Hakhokake Creek | source (Little York-Mt. Pleasant Rd.) | |
| Neshanic River | Kuhl Rd. (confluence of First and Second Neshanic Rivers) | |

| | | |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Stony Brook | Woodsville (entire length) | Port Mercer (entire length) |
| Hockhockson Brook | Hockhockson Rd. (Rt. 18) | |
| Mingamahone Brook | Hurley Pond Rd. (Birdsall Rd.) | |
| Pompton River | | Newark-Pompton Tpke. (NY Susquehanna RR bridge) |
| Clove Brook | Junction Rt 23 and Mt. Salem Rd. (source) | Rt. 565 (Clove Acres Lake) |
| Papakating Creek | Plains Rd. (George Hill Rd.) | |
| Pophandusing Creek | Oxford Rd (entire length) | Delaware River (entire length) |
| Blair Creek | Hardwick Center (Bass Lake dam) | |

() denote proposed boundary changes

Wild Trout Stream Changes

A new category "Native Brook Trout Streams" is proposed for *Wild Trout Stream* regulations. The category highlights 11 streams that are almost exclusively inhabited by native Brook Trout or will be as part of active management efforts. All Brook Trout in these waters must be released immediately and unharmed. To help reduce competition with more adaptive exotic trout species there is no minimum size limit for Brown and Rainbow Trout in these native trout waters. When allowed, harvest is limited to two Brown and/or Rainbow Trout per day.

Ten streams are proposed to join the Pequannock River, Van Campens Brook and Wanaque River with an increased minimum size limit of 12-inches for Brown Trout. Three of the streams, Beaver Brook (Clinton), Mill Brook (Randolph), and Spring Mills Brook are new to wild trout regulations.

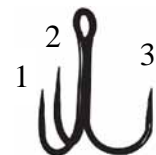
Three new streams are proposed to be added to the *Wild Trout Stream* regulation set; Brass Castle Brook (Washington), Dismal Brook (Mendham), and a section of the Raritan River S. Br. from just above Flanders-Drakestown to Schooleys Mtn. Rd. (Washington). As a result, five stocking points on the S. Br. would be dropped. These streams offer angling opportunities for multiple trout species. See additional information concerning proposed changes for the Raritan River S. Br. below.

Five streams are proposed to be no longer regulated as Wild Trout Streams due to the extremely low abundance of trout inhabiting the streams. These include Black Brook (Clinton WMA), Hance's Brook (Penwell), Mill Brook (Montague), Merrill Creek (above Merrill Creek Res.) and Parker Brook (Montague). Two additional waters, Bear Creek (Southtown) and Dark Moon Brook (Johnsonburg) are proposed to no longer be included within the regulation as these streams flow almost entirely through private property and afford little to no angling access.

Gear restrictions of only barbless hooks and no more than three hook points in total is also proposed when fishing any of the designated Wild Trout Streams. These changes and others concerning Wild Trout Stream Regulations are the result of a three-year initiative focused on re-evaluation of Wild Trout Stream Regulations and the state's wild trout resources.

Barbless Hooks and No More than Three Hook Points in Total proposed for *Catch and Release Areas and Wild Trout Streams*

Due to continued angler interest in limiting hook points and barbs when targeting wild trout and to reduce the potential for injury to fish which will be



continually caught and released it is proposed to allow only barbless hooks and no more than three hook points in total when fishing the state's two designated *Catch and Release Only areas* for trout and designated *Wild Trout Streams*.

Wild Trout Stream Regulations Proposed for upper sections of Raritan River S. Br.

The Raritan River S. Br. is one of the state's most productive areas for wild trout. The most upstream section, from Budd Lake to the dam located just upstream of Flanders-Drakestown Rd., is a stronghold for native Brook Trout. This section is not stocked and is proposed to be regulated as a Native Brook Trout Stream. All Brook Trout must be released, and a daily limit of two Brown or Rainbow Trout, of any size, is proposed.

The section of the Raritan River S. Br., from Flanders-Drakestown Rd. to just upstream of Schooleys Mountain Rd., including the Claremont TCA, supports a more diverse wild trout population dominated by Brown Trout, intermixed with Brookies, with a few wild Rainbows scattered as well. This section is proposed to be regulated as a *Wild Trout Stream*. As a result, the river's five most upstream stocking points, from Flanders-Drakestown Road downstream to the Bartley Wildlife Management Area, would no longer be stocked with trout.

The remaining section of the river from Schooleys Mtn. Rd. downstream to the confluence with the N. Br. will continue to be stocked. Due to the impressive wild Brown Trout population found between Schooleys Mtn. Rd to Lake Solitude a 12-inch minimum size limit for Brown Trout is proposed under the proposed *Trout Stocked Wild Brown Trout Managed* regulations.

Claremont TCA proposed to be regulated as part of the new Wild Trout Stream section on the Raritan River S. Br.

The Claremont Trout Conservation Area is one of New Jersey's most productive streams for wild Brook and Brown Trout. Unlike all other Trout Conservation Areas it is not stocked with trout. Regulating it as a *Wild Trout Stream* is more consistent with the fisheries present and streamlines regulations pertaining to the river. As the majority of wild Brown and Rainbow Trout within the Claremont Stretch are less than 9 inches the minimum size decrease from 15 to 9 inches, and a creel increase of one to two per day, will have little impact on the fishery. As the Claremont is located within the proposed Brook Trout Conservation Zone, all Brook Trout would have to be immediately released unharmed.

Trout Stocking on Rahway River an additional Two Miles proposed Downstream

Trout stocking on the Rahway River is proposed to be extended an additional two miles, from St. Georges Ave. to Lawrence St. in Rahway.

15-inch Size Limit for Landlocked Atlantic Salmon for Trophy Trout Waters

To allow for the consideration of expanding the Landlocked Atlantic Salmon stocking program to one or both of the Trophy Trout Lakes to fill a void left when Brown Trout stocking was discontinued a 15-inch minimum size and daily creel/possession limit of two in total for Brown and Rainbow Trout is proposed to be expanded to include Landlocked Atlantic Salmon.

Private Fishing Clubs located on publicly stocked waters may fish during the three-week Pre-Season Closure.

It is proposed to allow private fishing clubs located within the boundaries of publicly stocked sections of rivers to fish during the pre-season closure. All fish caught would have to be immediately release unharmed. These private stretches are not open to the public and are stocked with trout purchased by the club. The exemption applies to only sections of river where a fishing

club leases or owns both sides of the river, club boundaries (upstream and downstream limits) are clearly marked, and the club has obtained fish stocking permits for trout. Clubs wishing to participate must submit a request in writing to the NJDFW's Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries each year by March 1. This proposed change does not result in any change to existing stocking practices by the Division. The request would include copies of previous year's stocking permits, map of the club property where catch and release fishing will occur and a letter of intent to practice catch and release during the pre-season fishing closure.

General Regulations

Size Limit Increase Proposed for Muskellunge

The statewide size limit on Muskellunge is proposed to be increased from 36 to 40 inches. During a recently completed three-year assessment by the Division of Fish and Wildlife 74% of muskies collected were larger than 36 inches, and 25% were at least or greater than 44 inches. The increased size limit would more effectively align regulations with current size structure of the population while still allowing harvest.

Increased Size Limit Proposed for Four select Trophy Musky Waters

The size limit on Muskellunge is proposed to be increased from 40 to 44 inches on four waterbodies. During a recently completed three-year assessment by the Division of Fish and Wildlife, 40% to 70% of the muskies captured at Echo Lake Reservoir (Passaic), Greenwood Lake (Passaic), Lake Hopatcong (Morris), and Monksville Reservoir (Passaic) were at least 40 inches in size and 20% to 26% exceeded 44 inches. This would align regulations with the exceptional fisheries that have developed while allowing some anglers the opportunity to keep a trophy specimen. As Greenwood Lake is also located in New York State, the increased size limit is proposed to take effect April 1, 2019 to allow for a similar potential regulation change for New York.

Statewide Bass Regulations for Lake Audrey

Statewide bass regulations (12-inch minimum size, 5 per day) are proposed to replace catch and release only regulations for Lake Audrey. Dramatically declining pH levels, illegal harvest of Smallmouth Bass, and angler introduction of Largemouth Bass have thwarted efforts to maintain a Smallmouth Bass fishery within the lake.

List of Baitfish Species Proposed to be Amended

To protect several species of native fish species exhibiting significant population declines, the list of baitfish species is proposed to be reduced to eleven species of fish that are commonly and well distributed throughout the state.

Increased Size Limit Proposed for American Eels

In compliance with approved fishery management plans by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and for consistency with the State's Marine Fisheries Regulations the size limit on American Eels is proposed to be increased from 6 to 9 inches.