

Freshwater Regulations Background

Introduction

It is important to identify fish to determine if they are a regulated species. It is important to be aware of the regulations in the event that you encounter an Environmental Conservation Police Officer.

NYSDEC Role

The freshwater fishing regulations are implemented by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Bureau of Fisheries. To determine what is going on in fisheries, Regional Fisheries Managers use information collected through various sources including:

- The Angler Diary Program
- The Creel Census Program
- Fishery surveys utilizing electrofishing
- Nets, angling, local fishing clubs, and anglers

The NYSDEC used this information to determine the fishing regulations. Freshwater fishing regulations are reviewed and revised on a bi-annual basis through the Bureau of Fisheries. When new regulations are presented, input is gathered from interested citizens or constituents. This process begins two years before a regulation goes into effect. Based upon constituent input and professional judgment, the Regional Fisheries Manager develops a regulation change package which is reviewed by NYSDEC's central office and then posted on the web for public input. After the public comments on the change, the regulation is then approved, amended or rejected. If approved or amended, the proposed regulation is submitted to the DEC Commissioner for the final review. Once approved, the regulations are publicly announced and published in the DEC Fishing Regulations Guide.

Freshwater Fishing Rules

The five main components of the freshwater fishing rules and regulations include: license, species ID, size limit, open season, and daily limit.

License

NYS requires freshwater anglers, age 16 years and older, to have a fishing license. Licenses can be purchased at various locations, such as bait and tackle shops, sporting good stores, NYSDEC's Regional Headquarters, on-line at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6101.html>, and by phone at 1-86-NY-DECALS (1-866-933-2257).

When purchasing a fishing license, you will receive a current NYS Regulations Guide. Become familiar with it. The general regulation is listed in the front of the book. However, there are special regulations for each region. Be sure to familiarize yourself with your local regulations as well.

Species Identification

There are many freshwater fish species in NYS. Fish that are not listed in the NYS Regulations Guide are currently not regulated.

Size Limit

Many fish have size limits to protect the species. Size limits are dependent on each individual

species. Most often minimum size limit regulations are enacted to insure that the fish can reproduce at least once before they are taken from their environment.

Open Season

Some fish species have seasons when you can and cannot fish for them. These are most often based upon the spawning and reproduction time for that species.

Daily Limit

There are a certain number of fish of a given species that you can keep on a daily basis. The daily limit encompasses the entire day regardless of how many times or places one goes fishing. Daily limits are set to help sustain the fishery.

Enforcement

Environmental Conservation Police Officers enforce the rules and regulations set forth by the NYSDEC. Rule violation can result in a ticket/fine and possible confiscation of fishing equipment.¹

Vocabulary

- Anal Fin: Last bottom fin on a fish; located near the anal opening; used in balance and steering
- Bag Limit: Number of fish one is allowed to keep; each fish is different
- Caudal/Tail Fin: Fin on end of fish; used to propel the fish
- Dorsal Fin: Top or backside fin on a fish; used for balance and protection
- External Anatomy: The outside body parts
- Gills: Organ a fish uses to obtain oxygen from the water
- Lateral Line: Organ a fish uses to “feel” low vibrations; tiny microscopic pores
- Nares: Organ a fish uses to smell; similar to nostrils
- Open Season: When one can fish for that fish; each fish is different
- Pectoral Fin: Chest fins on a fish; used for balance
- Scales: Protective cover on a fish; similar to skin
- Size Limit: Specific size fish must be to keep; each fish is different
- Slime: Covers scales; layer protects from bacteria, parasites, etc.
- Ventral Fin: Bottom or belly fins on a fish; used in balance and steering

¹ New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. 2008. New York State Freshwater Fishing Official Regulations Guide, 2008-09.