



## State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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### TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT NATURAL RESOURCES

Clearinghouse Rule No. 03-014

The Department recommended and the Natural Resources Board adopted the following fishing regulation changes for inland, outlying and boundary waters after the 2003 Spring Fish and Wildlife Hearings.

The following rules were of statewide significance (Statewide vote, **yes – no**):

- Eliminate tagging of fish unless an individual obtains a scientific collectors permit **(2,969 – 705)**.
- Change the closing date for the general inland hook and line fishing season, rough fish spearing seasons, and hook and line seasons on the Great Lakes and tributaries to the first Sunday in March **(3,053 – 764)**.
- Create a separate sturgeon carcass tag for the Upriver Lakes (Lakes Poygan, Winneconne and Butte des Morts) and Lake Winnebago during the special sturgeon spearing seasons held on the Upriver Lakes every five years (the next of which will be held in 2005). This rule also reduces the season length from 2 days to 1 day for sturgeon spearing on the Upriver Lakes (Lakes Poygan, Winneconne and Butte des Morts) of the Winnebago System waters held every 5 years. **(1,689 – 1,011; NER 462 – 274)**.
- Identify waters open to hook and line lake sturgeon fishing and close all other waters to hook and line lake sturgeon fishing **(2,641 – 658)**.
- Close the hook and line fishing season for shovelnose sturgeon on the Chippewa river downstream from interstate highway 94 bridge at Eau Claire including its tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake **(1,971 – 722; WCR 437 – 96)**.
- Reduce the daily bag limit for walleye and sauger from 10 in aggregate of which no more than 6 may be walleye to 6 in aggregate on the Wisconsin-Iowa boundary waters (Mississippi River) **(1,996 – 773)**.
- Create a 20" to 27" protected slot limit for walleye with 1 fish over 27" allowed on the Mississippi River Pool 12 **(1,956 – 725)**. *A five-year sunset was added to this rule with input from the Conservation Congress.*
- Establish a fish refuge beginning December 1 of each year and lasting through March 15 of the following year in, on or along the Mississippi River from lock and dam number 11 downstream to the STH 61 and 151 bridge on the Wisconsin-Iowa boundary waters **(1,766 – 634)**. *The language was modified to exclude from the refuge a small area known as O'Leary Lake, which is popular for ice fishing for panfish and will not pose the threat of post-release mortality on saugers. In addition, a five-year sunset was added to the rule with input from the Conservation Congress.*
- Extend the 40" minimum length limit for muskellunge currently in effect on Holcombe flowage (Chippewa and Rusk counties) to include tributaries upstream to a barrier to upstream movement. This includes increasing the minimum length limit from 34" to 40" for muskellunge on the Jump river,

**Price county**; the Chippewa river and all tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake, the Flambeau river upstream to the Thornapple flowage dam including all tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake, and the Jump river and its tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake, **Rusk county**; the Chippewa river and all its tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake, Sawyer county; and the Jump river and tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake, **Taylor county (1,921 – 1,174; NOR 261 – 215)**. This proposal had local opposition to the South Fork Jump River being included. The Department staff worked with local Conservation Congress representatives and other publics interested in Upper Chippewa Basin river fisheries management on a compromise that would end the 40-inch minimum length at Big Falls on the South Fork of the Jump River in **Price County**. Therefore, the 40-inch minimum will extend up the South Fork of the Jump River in **Price County** to Big Falls.

The Department will adopt 15 fishing regulation changes of primarily local interest that were locally supported at the hearings.

The following proposals were dropped from consideration at this time:

- Increasing the minimum length limit from 14" to 18" and reducing the daily bag limit from 5 to 1 for bass on all or a portion of the Lower Wisconsin River. The current bass regulations will remain in place.
- Increasing the minimum length limit for muskellunge to 50 inches on selected waters in Oneida and Vilas counties.
- Increasing the minimum length limit from 15" to 28" and reducing the daily bag limit from 5 to 1 for walleye on Black Oak Lake, Vilas County.