

Frequently asked questions about the new fishing regulations for Ontario

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Q1: What is the major change in the 2008-2009 Ontario Recreational Fishing Regulations?

A: Ontario has gone from 37 fishing divisions to 20 new Fisheries Management Zones (Zones).

The new zones are based on ecological and social factors such as the province's climate zones, watersheds, fishing pressure and road networks, and are designed to better manage Ontario's fisheries. We are moving away from a lake by lake approach towards managing at a broad scale across the zone with a more consistent approach. Some exceptions have been removed for 2008 and more exceptions will likely be removed in the future.

The previous management approach was leading to increased regulation complexity because of a large number of individual lake regulations that were confusing to anglers and difficult to enforce.

Local residents are playing a direct role in determining the future of fisheries management in their area by participating in Fisheries Management Zone councils.

Q2: Ontario has introduced a new Licence for Canadian non resident anglers. Why the new licence?

Most other provinces in Canada have a non resident licence requirement for Canadian residents from other provinces. Up to now, Canadians not from Ontario were paying the same fee to fish in Ontario as residents of Ontario. The introduction of a new Canadian non resident anglers licence fee in addition to the Outdoors Card will bring Ontario into line with most other provinces in Canada. This is a fair approach for Ontario citizens who are required to pay higher fees than residents when fishing in most

other provinces. Licence fees go to support fish and wildlife management in the province.

Q3: Why is there a need to register ice huts in some of the new FMZs?

A: Ice hut registration is now required in zones 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20. Many individual lakes or districts currently require ice hut registration. Registration at a zone-wide scale and the setting of standardized ice hut removal dates were introduced to make it easier to determine where ice hut registration and removal dates apply and to assist with enforcement. Ice hut registration assists Conservation Officers to ensure all ice huts are removed prior to ice break up by enabling them to identify the owner of the ice hut.

Southern Ontario

Q4: What and why are there new walleye regulations in southern Ontario?

A: Zones 15, 16, 17 and 18 have new walleye regulations as follows:

- A reduction in catch and possession limits from 6 to 4, (2 for Conservation licence)
- New size restriction allowing only 1 fish greater than 46 cm (18 in.)
- Reduction in winter season by up to 8 weeks in some areas with a new March 1st closure in Zones 18 and 20.

Monitoring of walleye populations in southern Ontario has demonstrated poor health of the majority of populations. The reduced limits and new size limit will help to reduce the decline in walleye populations. The reduction in the winter season will reduce harvest of large adult walleye staging near spawning areas.

The new regulations will provide consistency in walleye regulations across the province. More restrictive regulations may be developed in consultation with zone advisory councils to ensure the sustainability of walleye populations in southern Ontario.

Q5: Why has there been the elimination of a winter angling season for lake trout on some lakes in eastern Ontario?

A: MNR has eliminated the winter season on natural lake trout lakes in some parts of Zone 18 in eastern Ontario because the sustainability of the fishery was at risk from the winter harvest.

Q6: Why are there new limits for Panfish?

A New catch limits were established provincially (50 for perch, 30 for crappie under a Sport Fishing Licence and 25 for perch, 10 for crappie under a Conservation Fishing Licence) to ensure the continued sustainability and fair allocation of the resource.

New limits for sunfish (bluegill, pumpkinseed, etc.) were also established at 50 fish in most Zones (25 for Conservation Fishing Licence). These have not been implemented in Zone 17 until further review by the Zone advisory council.

Q7: What are the main changes to angling on Lake Ontario (Zone 20)?

A: There will be more restrictive limits and seasons for some species on Lake Ontario. The seasons and limits on Lake Ontario (Zone 20) were established to provide sustainable fisheries and regulations that are consistent throughout the zone. These changes include:

- Reduction of walleye catch and possession limits in the St. Lawrence River – formerly Divisions 11 & 12A
- A closed season for northern pike in the Lake St. Francis area of the St. Lawrence River (formerly Division 12A)
- Increased size limit for muskellunge in the Lake St. Francis area of the St. Lawrence River (formerly Division 12A)
- Establishment of a catch and possession limit for yellow perch in Lake Ontario (formerly Division 8)
- Establishment of a limit on sunfish (consistent with the Province wide initiative)
- Reduction in whitefish and channel catfish catch and possession limits (consistent with the Province wide initiative)

The sport fishery for American eel is closed. American eel in Ontario have declined dramatically over the past decade and can no longer support a fishery. The closure of eel fisheries is consistent with nationwide efforts to assist in the recovery of American Eel populations.

Q8: What are the main changes to angling on Lake Erie-Lake St Clair (Zone 19)?

A: Two lines per licensed fisher may now be used when angling from a boat in open water in Lake St. Clair as well as Lake Erie to be consistent with American waters and promote tourism.

Northern Ontario

Q9: Why are there changes to the season and catch limits for lake trout and brook trout in Zone 11?

- A:** There is a reduction of season and catch limits for native lake trout and brook trout in Zone 11 (North Bay).
- Lake trout – Limit reduced from 3 to 2, brook trout – new size limit – not more than 1 fish greater than 31 cm (12.2 in.) However, the catch limit remains at 5,
 - Winter season reduced by 6 weeks (opens Feb 15th instead of Jan 1st).

Broad scale monitoring of lake trout in northeast Region from 2001-2005 indicated concern over the sustainability of lake trout populations. These regulations are intended to help address those issues.

Brook trout seasons were changed to align with lake trout so that anglers would not shift their efforts from the lake trout lakes to small, vulnerable brook trout lakes.

Q10: What are the changes for catching walleye in Zone 11?

- A:** The walleye limit in Zone 11 for holders of a Sport Fishing licence is now 4; with none between 43 and 60 cm, and not more than 1 fish over 60 cm.

For Conservation Fishing licence holders the limit is 2: with none between 43 and 60 cm and not more than 1 fish over 60 cm.

In Zone 11, there is also a reduction in the walleye winter fishing season which changes the winter fishing closure date from April 14th to the Monday after the 3rd Sunday in March, Zone wide. Season change in FMZ 11 reduces 24 exception regulations for lakes around Lake Nipissing. This is important so that the fishing pressure on Lake Nipissing doesn't shift to small lakes when the season closes, threatening sustainability on those lakes.

Note that on Lake Nipissing, the catch limits are the same as the Zone wide limit, but the size limit restrictions are different: anglers cannot keep any walleye between 40 – 60 cm on Lake Nipissing. Also the winter fishing season on Lake Nipissing closes on March 15.

Q11: What are the changes in Zone 7 for brook trout and why?

A: The changes to brook trout regulations in Zone 7 are as follows:

- A new size limit of not more than 2 fish greater than 30 cm, of which only 1 fish may be greater than 40 cm.
- A reduction in season by 2 weeks.

The new regulations will help to ensure sustainability across the new zone while harmonizing the regulations.

Lake Huron/Georgian Bay

Q12: What are the main changes on Lake Huron (Zone 13)/Georgian Bay (Zone 14)?

A: The primary change on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay will be with lake trout where the daily limit goes to 2 fish for a Sport Fishing Licence and 1 fish for a Conservation Licence. The change was necessary to protect existing natural lake trout stocks and to support rehabilitation efforts. Whitefish also has a daily limit of 12 fish for a Sport Fishing Licence and 6 for a Conservation licence.

Q13: Have fishing opportunities for salmon and trout been lost in the lower reaches of tributaries to Lake Huron and Georgian Bay (Southern and Northeast Regions)?

A. Fishing opportunities have not been lost in Georgian Bay and Lake Huron tributaries. Anglers can still fish all year for those salmon and trout species as they have in the past. The lower reaches of these tributaries are now part of Zones 13 (Lake Huron) or 14 (Georgian Bay), which have open all year seasons for these species zone-wide. It is no longer necessary to list these areas in the summary as exceptions where year-round fishing can occur.

MNR will be posting fact sheets with detailed maps showing the regulations in these waters on the website.

Bait

Q.14: How many bait fish and leeches can I have in my possession?

Anglers are allowed to have 120 bait fish and 120 leeches in their possession. This possession limit applies whether the baitfish and leeches were caught under a sport fishing licence or purchased from a bait dealer.

Q.15: Why do we have a new regulation about not being able to dump bait buckets?

Since many anglers buy bait from bait dealers and the bait is not normally from the body of water the anglers are fishing, there is a serious danger of spreading invasive species and fish diseases into new water bodies by emptying bait buckets when done fishing. A new regulation states that no person shall release live bait or live baitfish or empty the contents of a bucket or other moveable container used to hold bait or baitfish into any waters or within 30 m of any waters. The correct method of disposing of baitfish is to pour them on the ground 30 m from any water.