

Report to  
Legislative Council Rules Clearinghouse  
NR 20 Wis. Adm. Code  
Natural Resources Board Order No.  
FH-21-16

Wisconsin Statutory Authority

The department is directed under s. Section 29.014 (1), Stats., to establish and maintain any bag limits and conditions governing the taking of fish that will conserve the fish supply and ensure the citizens of this state continued opportunities for good fishing.

Section 29.041, Stats., provides that the Department may regulate fishing on and in all interstate boundary waters and outlying waters.

Federal Authority

States may manage the fish and wildlife resources located within their boundaries provided they do not conflict with regulations established in the Federal Register. None of these rule changes violate or conflict with the provisions established in the Federal Code of Regulations.

Comparison with Adjacent States

Individual state or provincial agencies are responsible for managing fisheries within their state boundaries and each jurisdiction has their own decision making process. However, all states and provinces that border a Great Lake are signatory to the Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries and have collaboratively developed Fish Community Objectives for each of the Great Lakes through their individual Lake Committees.

State agencies work together through the Lake Committee process to assure that Great Lakes management actions are communicated and discussed among the state and provincial jurisdictions. The Lake Michigan Committee has the following members on it: one representative from each state (Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana) and one representative from the Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority.

Court Decisions Directly Relevant

None.

Analysis of the Rule - Rule Effect - Reason for the Rule

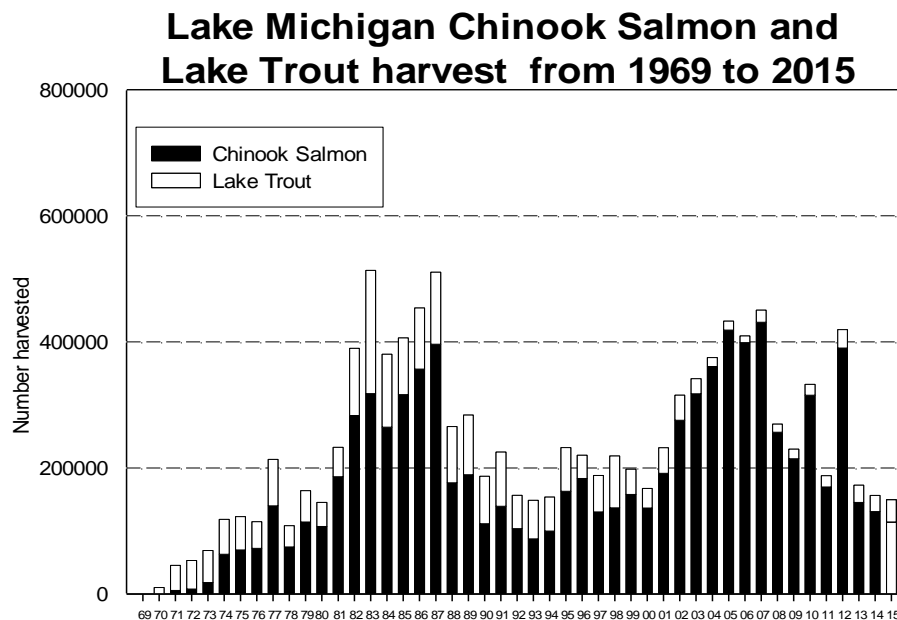
These rules are necessary in order to ensure a sustainable Lake Michigan trout and salmon fishery over the long-term that provides economic and natural resource benefits for all affected. The rule expands Lake Michigan lake trout harvest limits and season lengths. These changes will allow Wisconsin anglers to have increased fishing opportunities on Lake Michigan and possibly increase their harvest of lake trout.

The proposed rule will:

- Increase the lake trout daily bag limit for all Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan from 2 daily to 5.
- Change the current March 1 to October 31 open season to a year-round open season in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan, except that the Mid Lake Reef Complex under NR 20.03 (23) would remain a closed area.

- Beginning in 2022 the season framework will revert back to a 2 fish bag limit with fishing allowed from March 1 through October 31. This sunset may be repealed prior to 2022 if population monitoring identifies that the more liberal season framework is sustainable.

Lake trout harvest, seasons, and refuges were established by each agency to maximize the chances that the rehabilitation objectives set for lake trout were achievable. Data have shown that Wisconsin anglers could harvest around 80,000 lake trout and not jeopardize the chances for lake trout rehabilitation in Lake Michigan. Over the last 20 years, Wisconsin anglers have consistently harvested very low numbers of lake trout, averaging only 29,500 fish per year.



In recent years, the Lake Michigan Committee has recommended and the states approved several chinook salmon stocking reductions to match predators with available prey (alewife). These reductions in 1998, 2006 and most recently in 2013 were mostly tied to Chinook salmon with no other species taking any appreciable reductions in stocking numbers. In 2016, the Lake Michigan Committee recommended another chinook salmon stocking reduction. In conjunction, this rule would allow increased harvest of lake trout, reducing the number of trout in the lake and decreasing the predation pressure on alewives. The changes to lake trout bag limits, season lengths and refuge areas would also provide more fishing opportunities and respond to angler desires. This rule focuses on lake trout in order to balance management options among species that prey on alewives.

Agency Procedures for Promulgation

The department will hold a public hearing on Thursday June 22, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. The hearing will be held at the UW Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences, Great Lakes Research Facility Ballroom, 600 E Greenfield Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53204. We will request board adoption later in 2017, followed by a request for the governor’s signature and then legislative review.

Description of any Forms (attach copies if available)

None.

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