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### **2006-2007 Proposed Fish Code Changes**

Amendments to the 2006 and 2007 Fish Code will be published in the August 15, 2005, Register initiating the sixty day public comment period, which ends on October 14, 2005. A public hearing is scheduled for September 13 at 7 pm at the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Central Region Office located on the Assunpink Wildlife Management Area, Robbinsville, NJ. Written comments may be submitted by October 14, 2005 to:

Martin J. McHugh, Director  
NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife  
PO Box 400  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

The proposed amendments to N.J.A.C. 7:25-6 for the 2006 and 2007 fishing seasons are as follows:

1. For efficiency purposes, the Council proposes to amend the Code to fully encompass both the 2006 and 2007 fishing seasons. As a result of this change, dates associated with seasons and possession limits which currently extend into the spring of the 2007 fishing season were extended to December 31, 2007. These changes, however, are procedural in nature and do not reflect changes in timing or length of established seasons, unless specified otherwise below. The Council will continue to monitor the resource, and to the extent it is determined that adjustments are needed prior to the 2007 season, such changes will be proposed and amendments made to protect the resource.
2. April 8, 2006 and April 7, 2007, respectively, are proposed for the opening day of the 2006 and 2007 trout seasons (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.3(a)). All of the dates, throughout the Code, which are dependent on these dates, have been adjusted accordingly.
3. The Council proposes to remove Spruce Run Reservoir (Hunterdon), Manasquan Reservoir (Monmouth), Pompton Lake (Passaic), Canistear Reservoir (Sussex), Cranberry Lake (Sussex) and Mountain Lake (Warren) from the Division's trout stocking program. These large lakes, each more than 100 acres in size, yield lower return rates for trout resulting in low angler interest. In addition, Pompton Lake, Cranberry Lake, and Mountain Lake have limited public access. All six lakes are stocked with other warmwater fish species by the Division, and provide excellent fishing opportunities for these other species.
4. The Council also proposes to remove Biers Kill (Sussex), Roy Spring Brook (Sussex), Shimers Brook (Sussex), and Tuttle's Corner Brook (Sussex) due to concerns of the impacts of cultured trout on native brook trout populations in small streams.

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5. In addition to proposing to remove the above referenced waters from the list of trout stocked waters in proposed N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.3(i), the Council proposes the following waters for addition to the Division's trout stocking program: Heritage Pond (Atlantic), Dahnert's Lake (Bergen), Pemberton Lake (Burlington), Gloucester City Pond (Camden), Echo Lake (Monmouth), Hamilton Fire Pond (Monmouth), and Potash Lake (Passaic). The addition of these waters will increase trout fishing opportunities within these areas. Two waters, Echo Lake and Potash Lake, are in close proximity to the Manasquan Reservoir and Pompton Lake which are currently proposed for removal from the trout stocking program.

In N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.9(a), the Council proposes to no longer regulate Monksville Reservoir as a Holdover Trout Lake. Holdover trout lakes are those lakes which are able to support trout year round. Due to poor angler returns of stocked trout, Monksville Reservoir was removed from the State's trout stocking program in 2005. As a result, holdover trout regulations are no longer applicable. Anglers are reminded that lake trout were introduced into the reservoir in November of 2004 in an effort to determine if they may be better suited for current conditions within the reservoir.

6. Also in N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.9(b)4, a size limit of twelve inches and a daily creel of two is proposed for Atlantic (landlocked) salmon for regulated Holdover Trout lakes. The Council is anticipating the future introduction of landlocked salmon into one of the State's designated holdover trout lakes to further enhance the diversity of fishing opportunities. The proposed size and creel limit is required in order to protect this developing fishery.
7. In order to further protect the State's freshwater fishery resource, the prohibited snagging of fish is proposed to be expanded to include all species of fish except yellow perch and white perch in N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.12. Currently, only those species normally targeted by snagging are listed. As a result of this change the phrase "of the aforementioned" is proposed to be deleted as unnecessary. In addition, that all species so hooked, with the exception of yellow perch and white perch, must be returned to the water unharmed. The Council also proposes to expand areas where snagging is prohibited on all species, to include Swartswood Lake and its tributaries. This is due to the snagging of numerous game species in Neldon Brook, a tributary to the lake.

In N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.13(f), the Council proposes a catch and release season from March 20 to May 20, for muskellunge and tiger muskie from Echo Lake Reservoir, Mercer Lake, Mountain Lake and Monksville Reservoir. These four lakes provide brood stock for the Hackettstown State Fish Hatchery. Large broodstock are trap netted from these lakes each spring and transported to the Hackettstown facility. MS222, an anesthetic used at the hatchery to reduce injury during handling, has a required twenty-one day consumption advisory associated with its use. The proposed closed season would provide the necessary 21 day

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- closure, allow fish that would otherwise be kept at the hatchery for an extended period to quickly be returned to their waters of origin thereby reducing hatchery mortality, and result in an enhanced fishery for these waters.
8. For consistency with regulations for marine waters, the Council proposes to amend size limits for striped bass to two fish; one fish 24 to 28 inches in size, and one fish 34 inches or larger in N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.13(p) and 6:20(1). New size limits for striped bass in marine waters were established in September 2004 (N.J.S.A. 23:5-45.1(a)), increasing the size of the larger limit from 28 inches to 34 inches.
  9. Due to difficulty in identification between pure strain striped bass and their hybrids, regulations on hybrid striped bass on waters where the two species are found are adjusted to match the pure strain striped bass regulations, N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.13(m). The Council proposes to amend size limits for hybrid striped bass in the Raritan River to two fish to consist of one fish 24 to 28 inches in size and one fish 34 inches or larger to be consistent with limits established for pure strain striped bass under N.J.S.A. 23:5-45.1(a)). The new size limits, established in September 2004, for marine waters, increased the larger minimum size limit from 28 inches to 34 inches.
  10. The catch and release seasons for smallmouth and largemouth bass on the Delaware River, N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.20(a)1, are proposed for April 15, 2006 to June 16, 2006 and April 14, 2007 to June 15, 2007. These dates are consistent with the season currently proposed by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (58 PA. CODE CHS. 61) anticipated to take effect January 1, 2006. This change would provide consistency in the regulations governing this multi-state waterway.
  11. In N.J.A.C. 7:25-6.24, application information and specific guidelines are proposed to be added for scientific collecting permits. The guidelines include the timeframe for notifying Division law enforcement, dates for submission of reports, and use of standardized sampling protocols, when applicable. These proposed changes will reduce the use of incorrect sampling methods, assure management recommendations are consistent with those established by the State and improve timeliness of report submission.
  12. There are also numerous organizational changes proposed. These changes are administrative in nature and do not result in changes to current regulations.