

Angler Stories: Can You Relate?

We can relate! In the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries, although we may serve as a conservation biologist, a habitat specialist, a stocking coordinator or a fishing educator, we never lose sight of what initially inspired us to pursue our career: ***a deep appreciation of being outdoors enjoying the woods and waters.*** Whether it is camping and hiking, birdwatching, hunting or fishing, we all have our favorite memories.

Anglers were invited to share a memorable day while fishing in the Garden State. ***Can you relate to their excitement?***

The best part about living and fishing in New Jersey is the opportunity to target so many different species. I purposely use techniques and strategies that target multiple species, depending on the lake and season.

This fish is a great example. We were targeting lake trout — and catching many nice ones — when I caught this smallmouth bass. The anticipation of nice-sized bass joining the party was in the back of our minds, adding to the excitement of the great lake trout fishing. The variety of species and high potential for a surprise trophy catch is my single, favorite aspect of New Jersey fishing.

I do love to travel to fish for the species that New Jersey doesn't have, but as a multi-species angler, I can't think of a better fishing "home base" than the northern half of New Jersey!

Chris P.

Smallmouth bass



Great muskie fishing!

In early April I was fishing with my buddy, Capt. Dave V, on a small northern lake. While most fisherman were trout fishing, Dave was casting for muskies. Due to a work-related injury, I set my sights on a nice, pre-spawn bass.

When the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife trout stocking truck arrived, a few boats made a bee-line towards it. Instead, we headed for deeper water where I made my first cast with a 3/4 oz. XR-50 Rattle bait.

Letting it sink for a count of four, I tightened the line and made a sharp pull, yo-yoing the bait. On the second pull the rod bounced, then it felt like I was snagged... in 18 feet of open water? No, I was hooked into a pre-spawn muskie — and a big one at that!

Playing her to the boat, I loosened the drag slightly and led her towards the net. After a quick netting we were jumping and high-fiving! The unexpected female was huge: 46 inches and between 28–30 pounds. The kicker was that four months later, I caught another, smaller muskie using the same, exact set up!

Lou M.



A great Mother's Day story!



Tyler's birthday present.

For his third birthday in January of 2019, my youngest son Tyler received his first fishing pole. When warmer weather arrived, he was very excited to use it for the first time. He practiced — both indoors and out — casting and reeling. I took him out early one April morning when he quickly caught his first fish on the new pole.

By his smile you can see how proud he is. This photo is one of my favorites as it shows the joy we can have by simply getting outdoors and enjoying what New Jersey has to offer. I take pride in passing down fishing and hunting to my children, just as my father did for my brothers and me.

Jeff S.

On Mother's Day 2019, I took my 86-year-old mother fishing at my childhood pond. She had *never been fishing* and caught 15 bluegills! I will never forget it. My dad, who is deceased, taught me how to fish at this same pond.

Sean W.



Opening Day for Lily.

This is my daughter Lily's first fish. She came out on a very cold morning (Her Disney Frozen attire was appropriate) for Opening Day of Trout Season. She was determined, stayed focused and eventually was able to land this beauty.

It's special to experience, with my children, the outdoor recreation New Jersey provides, the same way my father did with me. She was so proud of this catch and still is today. The framed photo is still proudly displayed next to her bed.

Jeff S.



Vinny's first fish.

When my 4-year-old grandson Vinny caught his first fish on June 23, 2019, a bluegill sunfish, he became a fifth-generation sport fisherman in our family, a tradition now spanning three centuries. My two grandfathers, both born in the 1890s, were avid New Jersey fishermen since their early years. My dad's father taught him to fish; both grandfathers, along with my dad, taught my brother and me.

Like Vinny, I was 4 when I caught my first fish — with my grandfather's help. When I had twin boys of my own (and a daughter), born in the 1990s, I taught them. I was thrilled to help Vinny catch his first fish! Our family fishing tradition continues. I hope to be around to see a sixth generation New Jersey fisherman in our family.

James W.



Passaic Pike Fishing.

I want to thank the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife for the outstanding job you are all doing to establish and maintain the pike fishing in the Passaic River. I'm 43 years old and have been fishing in New Jersey since I was 6. I'm an avid fisherman and have fished all over North America, Canada and the Caribbean. I travel often to the Adirondacks for smallmouth and pike fishing.

I can't believe how incredible the pike fishing is here in my own backyard. I started fishing the Passaic River just this summer and I am completely blown away by this amazing pike fishery. I'm literally in disbelief at the numbers and size of fish I'm catching. Ever since I was a kid, I dreamed of catching pike like this. When I travel to the Adirondacks, I'm lucky if I catch a few of these beautiful fish over the course of several days.

This is absolutely a *world class* fishery that the Division of Fish and Wildlife has established, and I (as well as all New Jersey anglers) am so grateful for the work you are doing. I can only hope that your pike stocking program continues like this for years to come as I plan to introduce my son to the thrill of catching one of these incredible fish.

Leonard Parra

Freshwater Fisheries Forums and Trout Meeting

North Jersey Fisheries Forum

January 18, 2020; 10 a.m., Hackettstown State Fish Hatchery

South Jersey Fisheries Forum

February 22, 2020; 10 a.m.,
Batsto Village Visitor's Center in Wharton State Forest

Trout Meeting

February 29, 2020; 10 a.m., Pequest Trout Hatchery

Come and share your views and recommendations for the future of freshwater fisheries in New Jersey and learn about current research, management and fish culture activities!

The forum at Hackettstown will include a tour of the fish production facilities.

For more information or to pre-register (helpful, but not required) please call (908) 236-2118 or send an email to njfwfish@dep.nj.gov. Emails should include name, address, phone number and number of people attending.

Presented by NJ Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife. Go to www.njfishandwildlife.com/bfwf_forums.htm for updates.



Ron Jacobsen

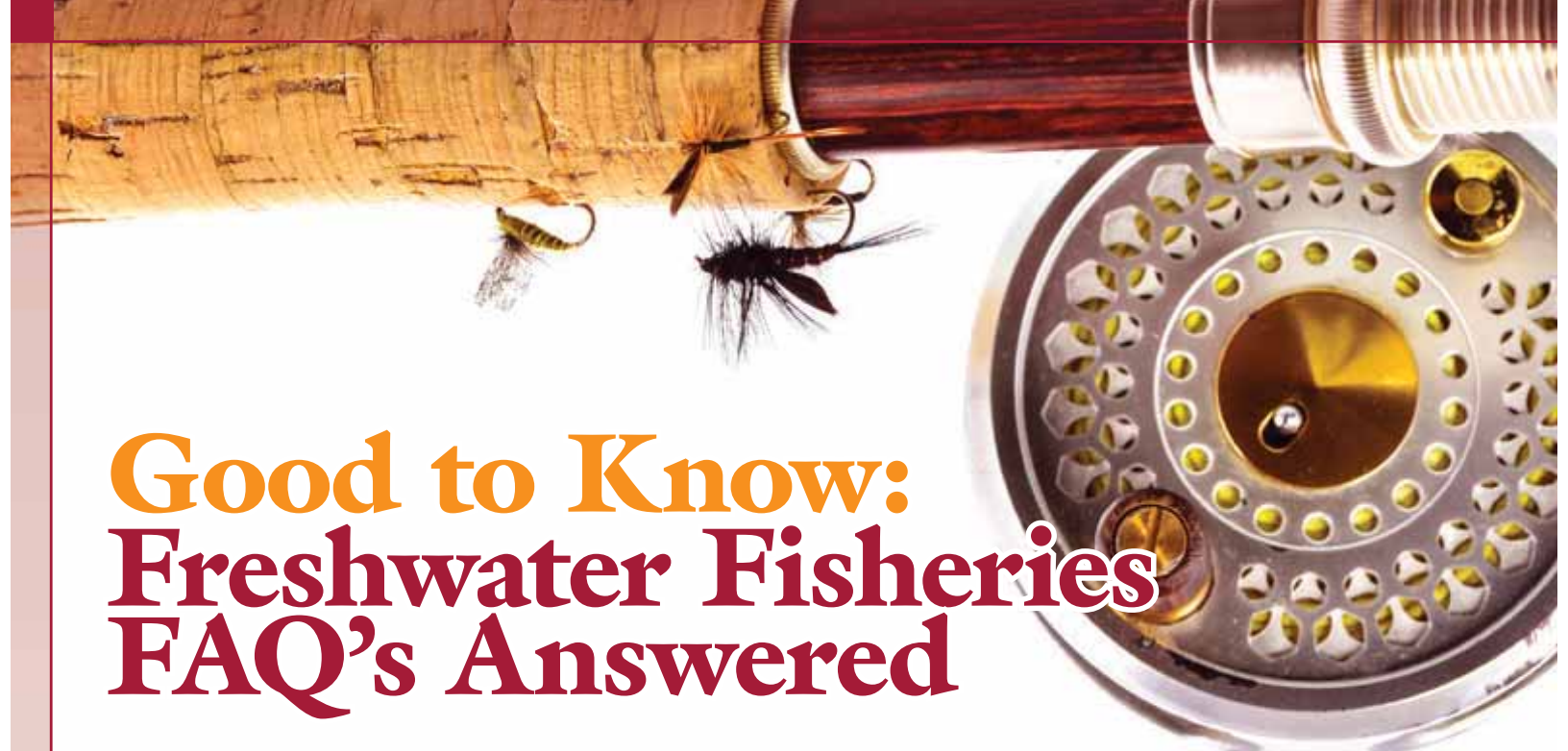
Nick Ruberto, Senior Wildlife Worker, stocked landlocked salmon like this beauty from our Hackettstown State Fish Hatchery.

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Good to Know: Freshwater Fisheries FAQ's Answered

When will Fish and Wildlife restore stocking of Brown (and/or Brook) Trout?

This may be the most frequently asked question in recent years. Brown trout will be reintroduced to the Pequest Hatchery once the raceways are covered. Although there are select strains of brown trout that are resistant to furunculosis — the disease that necessitated euthanizing nearly 230,000 trout at Pequest — it's important to know that other pathogens also pose a potential fish health threat. Covering the raceways is the best protection we can provide for the hatchery's valuable fish stock. Covers prevent pathogens from being introduced by birds that regularly prey on raceway trout despite the numerous deterrent devices already in place. There are no plans to bring back brook trout. However, in the future, Fish and Wildlife may investigate other trout strains to provide a diverse fishing experience for our coldwater anglers.

Is a license needed to fish private waters? Or in tidal waters?

Yes, a fishing license required to fish all fresh waters of the state, including private and tidal waters. However, when fishing below or downstream of the designated freshwater license boundary line (designated locations where a river changes from freshwater to saltwater) a fishing license is not required. See page 32 for the fishing license boundary line for designated waters.

Do I need a trout stamp if I don't keep the trout I catch?

Yes, a valid fishing license and trout stamp are both required to fish for or possess trout and salmon for all anglers (resident and non-resident) age 16 and over plus residents under age 70. No license or trout stamp is required for residents age 70 years and over.

May I stock bass or other fish in my local pond or other water?

In most cases, stocking of fish is not necessary and can be detrimental to the fishery. Since largemouth bass and sunfish reproduce naturally in most waterbodies, stocking is usually not necessary. Stocking fish on top of an existing fishery can cause it to become unbalanced and overpopulated, resulting in lots of small, stunted fish. A stocking permit is required before any fish may be introduced into a waterway and will only be approved if fisheries biologists determine that stocking is beneficial to the fishery. The Division of Fish and Wildlife typically handles stocking of waters open to the public for fishing after biologists complete an assessment of the existing fish population and it is determined stocking would be beneficial such as to bolster a weak year class, to re-establish a population or to create new fisheries.

Is a permit needed to stock fish in my pond? Or in a local lake?

Yes and yes. The stocking of any fish species (or their eggs) into any water, requires a permit from the Division of Fish and Wildlife, regardless of ownership. That includes waters owned by the state, a municipality, private property, a lake owner association and all other waterbodies. If you belong to a private lake association, please check that your organization has received the proper state permit. The permit protects against stocking exotic fish species, assures that healthy fish are purchased only from an approved source and that the quantity and species are appropriate for the waterbody. A Fish Stocking Permit application only costs \$2.

Do I need a license to help a child to fish?

That depends on the level of assistance. For baiting a hook or netting and unhooking a fish, a license is not required. If you cast, retrieve or fight the fish for a child, a license is required.

I have a fishing license. May I fish anywhere in a stream or lake?

A fishing license does not include the right to trespass. In New Jersey, property rights are assigned to the landowner — the key part being land. When wading in a stream or standing along a shoreline to fish, you may do so only from property that is open to the public; if not, you must have permission from the landowner. The same applies for launching a boat or kayak. However, while in a boat or kayak, and not standing on the bottom (land) of the stream or lake, you are allowed to fish and navigate anywhere in the water. Remember, getting out of a boat or kayak must be at a location open to the public unless you have previous permission from the landowner. Fish and Wildlife urges all anglers and boaters to be respectful of private property and to be courteous to landowners.

Where can I find information about places to go fishing?

To find places to fish in New Jersey, visit our website at <https://www.NJFishandWildlife.com/fishplc.htm> to find a list of waterbodies, by county, open to the public. Information includes the acreage, type of boat access and whether the use of an outboard is allowed. For trout fishing, visit <https://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/accesswater.htm>. Specific driving directions are included for several access points on trout-stocked waters.

I caught a snakehead/flathead catfish/ invasive species. May I release it?

No. The northern snakehead and flathead catfish are two of the 10 fish species listed as Potentially Dangerous Fish. (See Digest page 17). The possession or release of live potentially dangerous fish is prohibited. Anglers must destroy these species if encountered while fishing and are directed to submit a specimen or email a photo to NJFWFISH@dep.nj.gov or call the Lebanon Field Office at (908) 236-2118.

I found many dead fish along the bank of my favorite pond. What should I do?

For large numbers of dead fish (at least 50 or more), immediately call (877) WARN-DEP. Next, call any Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries field office: (908) 236-2118 for north Jersey, (609) 259-6964 for central Jersey and (856) 629-4950 for south Jersey. Report the estimated number of fish, location, fish species and general size (all small, all large or a mix), plus the location within the waterway (as specific as possible) as well as any odd coloration or odor of the water.

What should I do if I catch a fish that looks diseased?

Do NOT release a fish that looks ill or diseased! Please keep the fish and report it to our fish pathologist at (908) 637-4173 ext. 120 or to any of the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries offices at (908) 236-2118 for north Jersey, (609) 259-6964 for central Jersey and (856) 629-4950 for south Jersey.

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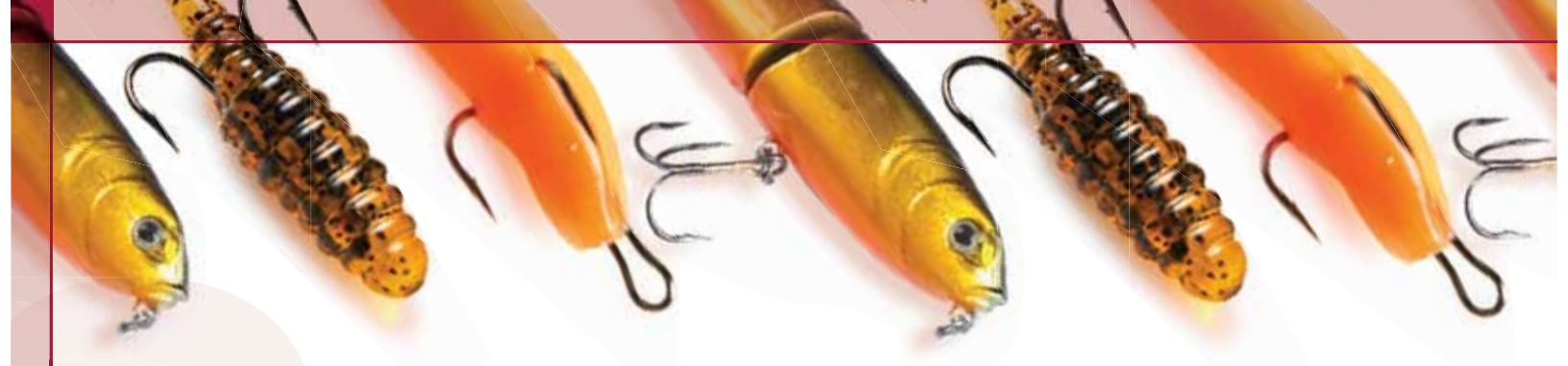
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I purchased my license online but it would not print. How do I get my license?

For difficulty printing in the new license system, FIRST ensure that your version of Adobe Acrobat Reader is current. Otherwise, log out then log in again to the system and choose "Reprint Documents." Look for pop-up PDF.

If that fails to print your license, call Aspira at (888) 773-8450 for additional assistance.

Are fish safe to eat?

Fish are an excellent source of protein and other essential nutrients, are low in fat and cholesterol and can play a role in maintaining a healthy diet. However, some species of fish, or species in certain waters, may contain high levels of environmental contaminants. The NJDEP provides guidance on limitations to consumption. Moderation is important. Be aware that certain waterbodies may have different advisories than the general advisories. Refer to <https://www.state.nj.us/dep/dsr/njmainfish.htm> for the most current information on consumption advisories for the waterbodies you fish.

What should be done when I see people fishing without a license? Keeping short fish? Keeping fish over the limit?

Never confront a suspected violator. Instead, contact the appropriate Fish and Wildlife regional Law Enforcement Office, (908) 735-8240 for north Jersey, (609) 259-2120 for central Jersey, and (856) 629-0555 for south Jersey. Weekdays after 4 p.m., or on weekends, call (877) WARNDEP to report the violation. Be sure to include your name and phone number so a conservation police officer can contact you directly if more information is needed.

What are the regulations for crayfish?

Crayfish are currently not regulated or protected under the state Fish and Game Code except within the Delaware Water Gap Natural Recreation Area where the use of crayfish, clams, mussels, reptiles or amphibians as bait when fishing is prohibited unless it is a commercially produced, preserved and packaged product.



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Can I use as bait the sunfish I caught when fishing for a muskie/pike/walleye?

Once in your possession, the sunfish you catch may be used as bait. Sunfish used as bait still count towards an angler's daily possession limit. If you caught 25 sunfish and use two as bait, you are still considered to have possessed 25 sunfish. Since sunfish are not considered baitfish, they may only be harvested by hook-and-line, not by other bait-collecting methods like a seine or minnow trap. Additionally, sunfish used as bait may only be used in the waterbody in which they were harvested. As it is illegal to transfer fish from one waterbody to another.

Does a kayak need to be registered as a boat?

No, unless the vessel is motorized, i.e., powered by a gas or electric motor. Those must be titled and registered. See <https://www.state.nj.us/mvc/vehicles/boating.htm>. Be aware that to operate a power vessel on non-tidal fresh waters, a boat license and New Jersey Boat Safety Certificate are generally required. See <https://www.njsp.org/marine-services/boating-safety-certificate.shtml> for details and exclusions.

Where can I get a map of the lake I fish?

A list of lake maps can be found by visiting our website at <https://NJFishandWildlife.com/lakemaps.htm>. Click on the lake name to view a printable topographical map of the lake.

I need to change the name on my license due to marriage/divorce/etc. How is that handled?

For assistance in changing your name in our licensing system please call the Division's General Information line in Trenton (609) 292-2965 and you will be forwarded to the appropriate staff to assist you.

What are the license requirements for the Delaware River?

License requirements for the Delaware River varies depending on the section of the river you fish and whether it is saltwater. See the rules governing the Delaware River on page 29 of this Digest.

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New Jersey's FREE Freshwater Fishing Days

June 6 and Oct. 17, 2020

NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife has split the Free Fishing Days. The first will be held on June 6, 2020 during the summer as is traditional. This day is part of the National Fishing and Boating Week which highlights the importance of recreational boating and fishing to enhance peoples' quality of life and to preserve our country's natural beauty. The second Free Fishing Day will occur after fall trout stocking on October 17, 2020 to bring attention to this great fishing opportunity. On these two days, only residents may fish New Jersey's public fresh waters without a license or trout stamp. All other regulations, including size and daily catch limits, remain in effect.

Trout in the Classroom (TIC)

Trout in the Classroom (TIC) is a science-based program that teaches children the importance of coldwater conservation through a hands-on learning approach. More than 40,000 New Jersey students participate in the TIC program annually.



Schools receive trout eggs in October from our Pequest Trout Hatchery. Students hatch and raise the trout, monitor water quality, learn fish biology, anatomy and much more as part of this cross-curricular, hands-on format. At the end of the school year students release their fish into approved streams.

Trout in the Classroom is an exciting, inexpensive program enlivening year-round curricula nationwide. For more information about the TIC program, visit NJFishandWildlife.com/tic.htm.

Hunter Education Program

Continue the Tradition!

Become an instructor with Fish and Wildlife's Hunter Education Program.

Our Hunter Education Unit is looking for New Jersey's best sportsmen and sportswomen to become instructors at locations where students take the test and field course after first having completed the home study portion. A minimum of six weekend days each year are required.



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