

GEAR — Projectile Gear

What is being considered?

The department is considering adding residences to the safety zone list for projectile gears.

Why is this change necessary?

Recreational bowfishing for Northern Snakehead has become a popular activity in recent years. Many individuals who participate in this activity find snakeheads in small creeks and coves and fish for them at night. The increase in calls to department staff and Natural Resources Police has made the department aware of a potential safety issue.

Currently, an individual who uses a projectile gear, as referenced in COMAR 08.02.25.02, .03, and .05 such as a bow and arrow or crossbow, must stay 100 yards away from a human being, a private or public swimming area, an international diving flag, an occupied duck blind, or another vessel, unless you first have permission from all people in those locations. However, homes are not considered under this list. When fishing at night, individuals walking outside of their homes may not be able to be seen by anglers who are fishing with projectile gear. This creates a situation where the angler may inadvertently fire a projectile that could ricochet and hit a person who can't be seen on the shore. Due to these safety concerns, the department is considering prohibiting the use of projectile gears within 100 yards from a dwelling, residence, or any potentially occupied structure that might contain life unless specific advanced permission exists. The department is looking for feedback on this addition to the safety zone list. This would provide an added layer of public safety for individuals living near areas where bowfishing is popular while providing clear rules to those participating in the activity.

Who will this affect?

This change would affect commercial harvesters and recreational anglers who use projectile gears.

When will this be effective?

The department expects this change to be effective in the winter of 2022-2023. However, the exact date cannot be determined. The department will follow our normal scoping and proposal procedures.

Has this change been discussed with advisory commissions?

The change was discussed at the July 2022 meetings of the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission and the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission. Both commissions recommended moving forward with scoping.