

Fishing in Nontidal Waters — Removal of Special Regulations

What is being considered?

The department would like to:

- 1) Replace the special regulations on certain impoundments with statewide regulations.
 - a) Eliminate the black bass (largemouth bass and smallmouth bass) catch and return regulations for Wheatley Lake located in Charles County. Wheatley Lake is the only impoundment under this restriction. Statewide rules for black bass (open season June 16 through the last day of February, 12-inch minimum size, 5 fish per person per day) would apply in this area.
 - b) Eliminate the Limited Harvest regulation. Limited Harvest regulations restrict the daily harvest to 10 fish total (all species in aggregate), only one of which may be a largemouth bass. Statewide limits for all species, not just black bass, would apply in the following water bodies:

Water Body	County
Allens Pond	Prince George's
Bowie Town Center Pond	Prince George's
Cosca Lake	Prince George's
Farm Museum Pond	Carroll
Governor's Bridge Natural Area Pond	Prince George's
Greenbelt Lake	Prince George's
Hughesville Pond	Charles
Hutchins Pond	Calvert
Lake Artemesia	Prince George's
Merkle Wildlife Management Area — all ponds located within the Merkle area boundaries.	Prince George's
Milltown Landing Pond	Prince George's
Myrtle Grove Pond	Charles
Pemberton Pond	Wicomico
Rising Sun Pond — age restricted March 1 through May 15	Cecil
Roberts Field Pond	Carroll
Robert's Mill Pond	Carroll
South Germantown Park Pond located in South Germantown Park.	Montgomery
Tucker Pond	Prince George's
Westminster Community Pond	Carroll

- c) Remove the designation of "Trophy Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass Fishing Area" from four areas. Statewide limits for all species would apply in the following water bodies:

Water Body	County
Blairs Valley Lake	Washington
Centennial Lake	Howard
Chesapeake Ranch Estates — all ponds	Calvert
Patuxent Naval Air Test Center — all ponds	St. Mary's

- 2) Change the designation of “Trophy Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass Fishing Areas” to “Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass Slot Limit Fishing Areas”. This will apply to Johnsons Pond (Wicomico County), Leonard Mill Pond (Wicomico County), Little Seneca Lake (Montgomery County), and St. Mary’s Lake (St. Mary’s County). This is a name change for the areas. The rules for these areas are not changing.

Why is this change necessary?

Current special regulations have not met statewide management objectives for black bass. Reverting to statewide regulations in several areas will simplify regulations and remove unnecessary angling restrictions.

The “Limited Harvest” restrictions contributed to regulation complexity without achieving management objectives for largemouth bass. The daily harvest of ten total fish species is unnecessary because statewide rules will provide protection. The designation “Trophy Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass Fishing Area” was generally applied to waters characterized by an abundance of 8 to 12-inch bass, not to areas with very large bass. The designation increased angler confusion and set unrealistic expectations for the fishing experience. Changing the designation to “slot limit fishing areas” is a housekeeping action that will better describe an area.

The Chesapeake Ranch Estates and the Patuxent Naval Air Test Center ponds are not open to the general public and therefore not actively managed by the department. Statewide regulations should apply.

Who will this affect?

This action will affect recreational anglers fishing in 24 impoundments.

When will this be effective?

The department expects this change to be effective in 2021, however the exact date cannot be determined. The department will follow our normal scoping and proposal procedures.

Has this change been discussed with advisory groups?

1. Discussed with the Black Bass Advisory Committee at their meeting on April 5, 2021. The committee members supported all ideas.
2. Discussed at Sport Fisheries Advisory Committee (SFAC) and Tidal Fish Advisory Commission (TFAC) April 2021 meetings as part of the workgroup reports.
3. Scoped with SFAC and TFAC at their April 2021 meetings. Commissioners did not have comments at this meeting and recommended that the department move forward with the normal scoping process.