

## **Inland Fishing Proposals for 2026-2027**

### **Public Mountain Trout Waters**

#### **F1. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Reclassify 0.1 miles of Rich Branch in Buncombe County from Hatchery Supported Trout Waters to Wild Trout Waters.

#### **Justification:**

Rich Branch is located entirely on Pisgah Game Land and contains a population of wild Rainbow Trout. Most of the stream is classified by default as Wild Trout Waters. Stocking is no longer appropriate for the short reach on the lower end of Rich Branch classified as Hatchery Supported Trout Waters and should default to Wild Trout Waters.

*15A NCAC 10C .0205 PUBLIC MOUNTAIN TROUT WATERS*

#### **F2. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Modify the boundaries of the following Hatchery Supported Trout Waters to represent the specific reach being stocked:

- Bent Creek in Buncombe County. The new reach will be from Rich Branch to the N.C. Arboretum boundary line.
- Cane Creek in Buncombe County. The new reach will be from S.R. 2785 to the S.R. 3138 bridge.
- Stony Creek in Buncombe County. The new reach will be from the confluence of Carter Creek and Mineral Creek to Dillingham Creek.
- West Buffalo Creek in Graham County. The new reach will be from the confluence of Squally Creek and Little Buffalo Creek to Lake Santeetlah.
- Shut-In Creek in Madison County. The new reach will be from the confluence of East Fork Shut-In Creek and West Fork Shut-In Creek to the French Board River.
- Spillcorn Creek in Madison County. The new reach will be from Baker Creek to S.R. 1330.

#### **Justification:**

When these waters were originally designated as Public Mountain Trout Waters and classified as Hatchery Supported Trout Waters, the descriptions vaguely referenced the headwaters or entire stream. The proposed boundaries are more explicit and better reflect where trout are managed through stocking.

*15A NCAC 10C .0205 PUBLIC MOUNTAIN TROUT WATERS*

#### **F3. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Reclassify 1.1 miles of Corner Rock Creek in Buncombe County located on Pisgah Game Land from Hatchery Supported Trout Waters to Wild Trout Waters and remove 130 yards of Corner Rock Creek downstream of the game

land boundary from Public Mountain Trout Waters.

**Justification:**

The reach of Corner Rock Creek located on game land contains a wild population of Rainbow Trout and would be more appropriately managed under the game land default Wild Trout Waters classification.

*15A NCAC 10C .0205 PUBLIC MOUNTAIN TROUT WATERS*

**F4. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Modify the upper boundary of Hatchery Supported Trout Waters on the Swannanoa River in Buncombe County. The new reach will be from River Walk Park in Black Mountain to the Wood Avenue bridge, at the intersection of N.C. 81 and U.S. 74A in Asheville, except where posted against trespassing. This proposal will remove 1.2 miles from Public Mountain Trout Waters.

**Justification:**

There is no public access on the Swannanoa River upstream of River Walk Park, and trout are not stocked in that reach. This change will better reflect where trout are managed through stocking.

*15A NCAC 10C .0205 PUBLIC MOUNTAIN TROUT WATERS*

**Mountain Trout**

**F5. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Allow year-round fishing with no closed season on Hatchery Supported Trout Waters impoundments regardless of whether they are used for hydropower production or municipal water supply.

**Justification:**

Currently, the NCAC allows for an exception to the closed season for fishing on impoundments classified as Hatchery Supported Trout Waters which are hydropower reservoirs and municipally-owned water supply reservoirs. Impoundments to which the exception applies are listed in the NCAC. However, there are reservoirs classified as Hatchery Supported Trout Waters that are neither used for hydropower nor water supply for which the exception should apply. Cliffside Lake is one example, and the US Forest Service, the landowner, has requested that Cliffside Lake remain open to fishing year-round with no closed season. Removing the criteria applying only to power and municipally-owned water supply reservoirs will allow the flexibility to provide additional angling opportunities on Hatchery Supported Trout Waters impoundments, if deemed appropriate.

*15A NCAC 10C .0205 PUBLIC MOUNTAIN TROUT WATERS*

*15A NCAC 10C .0316 MOUNTAIN TROUT*

**F6. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Add the Cullowhee Dam Impoundment to the list of Hatchery Supported Trout

Waters impoundments which are open for fishing year-round with no closed season.

**Justification:**

Cullowhee Dam impounds 0.5 miles of the Tuckasegee River in the Town of Cullowhee in Jackson County and was used for water supply until a few years ago. Prior to the 2015-2016 regulation cycle, the specific impoundments classified as Hatchery Supported Trout Waters to which the exception to the closed season for fishing apply were not listed in the NCAC. Previously, the exception was applied to the Cullowhee Dam Impoundment, but due to the change in operation, the impoundment is not listed currently in the NCAC. Confusion among anglers has occurred as they were accustomed to the impoundment not having a closed season and were uninformed about the change. With the proposed change to eliminate the exception applying only to power and municipally-owned water supply reservoirs, adding the Cullowhee Dam Impoundment to the list of reservoirs classified as Hatchery Supported Trout Waters for which there is no closed season for fishing would be appropriate.

*15A NCAC 10C .0205 PUBLIC MOUNTAIN TROUT WATERS*

## **Fishing on Game Lands**

**F7. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Designate waters on South Mountains Game Land in Burke and McDowell counties as Public Mountain Trout Waters and classify them as Wild Trout Waters.

**Justification:**

Wild Trout Waters regulations already apply to waters on South Mountains Game Land in Cleveland and Rutherford counties. This change will clarify that Wild Trout Waters regulations apply to waters on the entire game land.

*15A NCAC 10D .0104 FISHING ON GAME LANDS*

## **Bass**

**F8. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Remove the daily creel and establish that no more than five fish greater than 14 inches may be possessed in Lake Cammack in Alamance County.

**Justification:**

Routine surveys, including the most recent (2023), indicate that the Lake Cammack Largemouth Bass population remains stunted with only a small percentage of the population greater than 14 inches. This condition has persisted for more than 20 years. Anglers often express displeasure with the quality of the fishery in conversations with Inland Fisheries staff. This change would allow for the harvest of smaller Largemouth Bass from the reservoir

which should reduce crowding of smaller fish and allow the remaining Largemouth Bass grow to larger average sizes.

*15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS*

**F9. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Remove the daily creel limit, a protective slot limit of 14 to 22 inches, and possession restriction for fish greater than 22 inches for Spotted Bass in the Alleghany County portion of New River downstream of Fields Dam (Grayson County, Virginia).

**Justification:**

Size and creel limits have been removed for Spotted Bass and Alabama Bass in both North Carolina and Virginia. The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources jointly manage this section of the New River with the Wildlife Resources Commission because it meanders between each state multiple times. This change will make black bass size and creel limits on the New River consistent with other rules in North Carolina and Virginia.

*15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS*

*15A NCAC 10C .0321 SMALLMOUTH BASS*

*15A NCAC 10C .0322 ALABAMA BASS AND SPOTTED*

**F10. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Remove the minimum size limit of 14 inches for White Bass. The creel limit of 10 fish per day will be retained.

**Justification:**

A minimum size limit of 14 inches and a daily creel limit of 10 fish was established beginning August 1, 2017. The goal of this regulation was to protect White Bass up to two years old and to increase the size structure and age structure of these populations. Results from recent surveys on the Yadkin and Eno rivers indicate that less than 10 percent of the fish collected are greater than or equal to 14 inches total length indicating the regulation has not resulted in an increased size or age structure. Retaining the current daily creel limit will help prevent overharvest in these fisheries.

*15A NCAC 10C .0318 WHITE BASS*

## **Spotted Sea Trout**

**F11. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Establish a no possession slot limit from 20 to 26 inches and reduce the daily creel limit from four fish per person to three fish with only one fish greater than 26 inches for Spotted Seatrout in inland and joint fishing waters. The minimum size limit of 14 inches will be retained.

**Justification:**

The North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries has determined Spotted Seatrout is experiencing overfishing, and the Spotted Seatrout Fisheries

Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 1 indicates harvest reductions are required. This change is consistent with the FMP as adopted by the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission at their March 2025 business meeting. This change is designed to decrease overfishing within two years and will maintain consistency in Spotted Seatrout regulations across inland, joint, and coastal fishing waters.

*15A NCAC 10C .0325 SPOTTED SEA TROUT*

## **Spawning Areas**

### **F12. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Prohibit fishing from March 1 to May 31 in the recently constructed Kings Bridge floodplain slough (35.377100 N, -82.530389 W) connected to the French Broad River 0.6 miles downstream of the NC 191 (Haywood Road) bridge in Henderson County.

#### **Justification:**

Closure of the Kings Bridge slough to fishing during the Muskellunge spawning season would prevent targeted angling and the potential harvest of Muskellunge during their spawning period. Construction of the Kings Bridge backwater slough was conducted specifically to restore spawning and nursery areas for adult and juvenile Muskellunge to promote natural reproduction and recruitment of juvenile fish to the population. The French Broad River Muskellunge population currently has extremely limited to no natural reproduction or measurable recruitment. The population has been supported by hatchery produced Muskellunge since 1970.

*15A NCAC 10C .0208 SPAWNING AREAS*

## **Possession of Certain Fishes**

### **F13. General Description of Proposed Change:**

Add Asian Pond Mussel (any species of the genus *Sinanodonta*) and Golden Mussel (any species of the genus *Limnoperna*) to the list of species for which it is unlawful to transport, purchase, possess, sell, or stock in the public or private waters of North Carolina.

#### **Justification:**

Asian Pond Mussel and Golden Mussel are species native to Russia, China, and southeast Asia that can result in dense colonization. Asian Pond Mussels pose a serious threat to native populations of mussels from the family Unionidae. Similar in appearance and biology to Zebra and Quagga Mussels, Golden Pond Mussels can cause extensive ecological and economic harm if introduced. These species have recently been found in North America. There is concern of their spread throughout the United States.

*15A NCAC 10C .0211 POSSESSION OF CERTAIN FISHES*