

EXHIBIT E-2

June 18, 2026



Fiscal Note for 2027-2028 Annual Cycle Rule Proposals Wildlife Resources Commission - Inland Fisheries

Rule Amendments: 15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS
15A NCAC 10C .0314 STRIPED BASS
15A NCAC 10C .0414 BLUEFISH
15A NCAC 10C .0425 SHEEPSHEAD

Agency Contact: William Casola
Policy Analyst
NC Wildlife Resources Commission
1751 Varsity Drive
Raleigh, NC 27606
(919) 707-0125
william.casola@ncwildlife.gov

Fiscal Impact: State Government: No
Local Government: Yes
Private Impact: Yes
Substantial Economic Impact: No

Authority: G.S. 113-134; 113-292; 113-304; 113-305

BACKGROUND

The wildlife resources of the State belong to the people of the State as a whole, including the enjoyment of these resources (G.S. 113-131(a)). The Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) is tasked with the conservation of wildlife resources of the State (G.S. 143-239). This responsibility includes managing as equitably as possible the various competing interests regarding these resources, including the use and take of such resources (G.S. 113-131.1(a)). The statutes governing wildlife resources are found in Chapter 113, Subchapter IV of the General Statutes, and WRC has been granted rulemaking authority to implement the provisions of these statutes (G.S. 113-134).

As part of its mission, the WRC conducts an annual review of its inland fishing, wildlife, and game land regulations to determine whether the rules need to be adjusted in order to accomplish the objectives of managing wildlife resources or Commission property through a biologically sustainable harvest consistent with sound conservation objectives; managing WRC-owned land for the conservation of wildlife resources, and the enjoyment of the public; and implementing legislative directives.

A summary of the proposed rule amendments is shown below along with accompanying rule text. Many of the proposed amendments change what anglers may harvest in specific waters and where anglers may harvest certain species. Some of the proposed amendments seek to increase restrictions to protect the resources, while others increase angling opportunity or provide clarity to anglers. All the proposed changes are intended to ensure future angling opportunity, and despite the changes, no significant impact to angling participation is expected.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS BY RULE AND SUBJECT

15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS (Lake Holt)

The proposed amendment removes the daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass less than or equal to 14 inches and increases the creel limit from 2 fish per day to 5 fish per day for Largemouth Bass greater than 14 inches at Lake Holt.

Largemouth Bass are overpopulated at Lake Holt and the population has shown stunted growth rates. Harvest of smaller fish will allow for increased growth in the Largemouth Bass remaining in the lake.

In 2025 the Commission's Social Research Unit conducted a survey of Largemouth and other Black Bass (Smallmouth, Spotted, Alabama) anglers in NC. The population of Largemouth Bass anglers was estimated to be about 675,000 anglers, with the majority fishing in lakes and reservoirs (78%) and primarily practicing catch and release (88%). While size and creel amendments at Lake Holt and Cane Creek (page 4) directly impact the small percentage (12%) of Largemouth Bass anglers who regularly harvest fish, the amendments are anticipated to have positive cascading effects on the overall size and age structure of Largemouth Bass populations in these lakes, resulting in increased angler satisfaction. Currently, about 56% of Black Bass anglers in NC are either somewhat or very satisfied with their Black Bass fishing experience.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated state government impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require more or less staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

Local governments could experience modest positive indirect impacts if these targeted harvest adjustments improve the Largemouth Bass population at Lake Holt, potentially boosting angler spending on fishing trips, gear, bait, and local services in the surrounding community.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment increases harvest opportunity by allowing unlimited harvest of smaller bass and increasing harvest of larger bass from 2 per day to 5 per day. Additionally, the amendment should increase angler satisfaction by building a population that supports larger, more desirable, Largemouth Bass in Lake Holt.

15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS (Cane Creek)

The proposed amendment removes the 16-inch minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass in Cane Creek (Union County). The statewide size restriction will apply where there is no minimum size limit but only two bass may be less than 14 inches.

The minimum size limit in the creek has led to smaller sized Largemouth Bass and decreased catch rates of legal-size fish. The smaller fish need to be removed from the population to allow for increased growth in the fish remaining in the creek.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated state government impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require more or less staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

Additional angling opportunities may increase the number of people visiting local businesses, which may result in an increase in the purchase of goods and services as they relate to the needs of this user group (e.g., food, gas, fishing supplies, etc.). This anticipated benefit cannot be quantified.

Private Impact

The proposed change increases harvest opportunity by removing the minimum size limit. Additionally, the proposed change should increase angler satisfaction by building a population that supports larger, more desirable, Largemouth Bass.

15A NCAC 10C .0314 STRIPED BASS (Tar-Pamlico & Neuse Season)

The proposed amendment will establish a Striped Bass harvest season from April 1 to April 30 in the inland waters of the Tar-Pamlico River and its tributaries and the Neuse River and its tributaries. The daily creel limit will be one fish in aggregate and possession of striped bass or striped bass hybrids less than 18 inches or between 22 and 27 inches in length will be unlawful. The NC Division of Marine Fisheries will be changing their regulations to provide regulatory consistency in coastal waters. This regulatory change is part of the cooperative Striped Bass management between the two agencies.

Hatchery grown Striped Bass have been stocked in the Tar and Neuse rivers for thirty years in an attempt to create a self-sustaining fishery. However, efforts to restore a self-sustaining striped bass

population have not been successful in these rivers and this is a put, grow, and take fishery. The proposed rule change provides additional opportunities on the hatchery supported Striped Bass populations in the Tar and Neuse rivers, while avoiding potential take of Roanoke River Striped Bass that occasionally migrate into these areas.

*NOTE: This proposed amendment mirrors and will replace the current temporary rule.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated state government impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require more or less staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement. Although striped bass are a high-value species with a loyal angler base, any resulting shift in angling pressure is not expected to create a measurable change in fishing license sales or state revenues.

Local Impact

Additional angling opportunities may increase the number of people visiting local businesses, which may result in an increase in the purchase of goods and services as they relate to the needs of this user group (e.g., food, gas, fishing supplies, etc.). This anticipated benefit cannot be quantified.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment provides additional angling opportunities by allowing harvest of Striped Bass in an area that was previously closed to harvest. This may entice anglers to fish these waters more frequently, resulting in increased angler satisfaction, participation, and trip-related expenditures. The WRC does not have a mechanism to determine the specific fiscal impact of the proposed amendment on private individuals.

15A NCAC 10C .0314 STRIPED BASS (Lake Townsend)

The proposed amendment increases the minimum size limit for Striped Bass and its hybrids in Lake Townsend from 16 inches to 20 inches.

Striped Bass are no longer being stocked in Lake Townsend and management for the species has ceased because striped bass survival has been poor for many years even with stocking efforts. This lake will be managed with statewide size and creel limits.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated state government impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require more or less staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impact as the change to the size limit is not expected to generate measurable changes in recreational fishing activity or related economic effects at the local level.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment decreases harvest opportunity by increasing the minimum size limit. However, this reduces regulatory complexity for anglers fishing this lake, as it will be managed with state-wide size and creel limits for Striped Bass.

15A NCAC 10C .0414 BLUEFISH

The proposed amendment increases the daily creel limit from 3 fish to 5 fish.

The proposed amendment follows the recommendations outlined by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council for recreational bluefish harvest. The 2025 management track assessment for bluefish concluded that overfishing was not occurring, and while the stock was not overfished, it has not yet fully rebuilt to the target reference point. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be about 89% of the biomass target. The stock is projected to be rebuilt in 2025. The Council and Bluefish Management Board adopted an updated commercial quota and recreational harvest limit that represent an increase of approximately 50% for the commercial quota and 40% for the recreational harvest limit. Recreational limits were modified with the recreational creel limit increasing from 3 fish to 5 fish.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated state government impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require more or less staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impact as it is not expected to generate measurable additional recreational fishing activity or related economic effects at the local level.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment increases harvest opportunity by increasing the daily creel limit. This may increase angler satisfaction.

15A NCAC 10C .0425 SHEEPSHEAD

The proposed amendment reduces the daily creel limit from 10 fish to 5 fish and increases the minimum size from 10 inches to 14 inches.

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) issued a proclamation modifying sheepshead size and creel limits for recreational and commercial harvest in joint and coastal fishing waters. The proposed change decreases the daily creel limit from 10 fish to 5 fish and increases the minimum size from 10 inches to 14 inches in Inland Fishing Waters and Joint Fishing Waters (hook-and-line) to be consistent with the DMF proclamation. Reducing overall harvest pressure and increasing the minimum size should grow and protect the spawning stock.

DMF Sheepshead Management Issue Paper: Due to increases in fishing pressure, particularly on juvenile fish, and a decline in older fish observed in recent years, the Division implemented management changes in March 2026 for sheepshead.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated state government impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require more or less staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

Local governments could experience a modest indirect impact if more restrictive harvest limits reduce angler spending in local communities, including expenditures on fuel, bait, tackle, lodging, food, and related services.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment decreases harvest opportunity by increasing the daily size limit and daily creel limit. While the WRC does not have a mechanism to determine the specific fiscal

impact of the proposed amendment on private individuals, recreational fishing for sheepshead has grown in popularity in North Carolina in recent years, particularly in coastal and joint fishing waters. This species is increasingly targeted by anglers due to its accessibility, strong fight, and value as a food fish, contributing to fishing-related expenditures such as bait, gear, fuel, and charter services. As a result, the fishery likely supports a meaningful level of recreational activity, and more restrictive harvest limits may reduce short-term harvest rates and associated angler satisfaction. However, these measures are intended to support the long-term sustainability of the stock, which may help preserve the fishery and its associated economic activity over time.

1 15A NCAC 10C .0305 is proposed for amendment as follows:

2
3 **15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS**

4 (a) The daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass is five fish, except as otherwise specified in this Rule. ~~in waters~~
5 ~~identified in Paragraphs (d), (e), (f), (l), (m), (n), and (o) of this Rule.~~

6 (b) There is no minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass, but only two ~~of them~~ may be less than 14 inches except as
7 otherwise specified in this Rule. ~~in waters identified in Paragraphs (d) through (o) of this Rule.~~

8 (c) There is no closed season, except in Jean Guite Creek and associated canals within the Town of Southern Shores
9 in Dare County and in the ponds associated with Martin Marietta Park in Craven County, where Largemouth Bass
10 shall not be taken or possessed. ~~in waters identified in Paragraph (n) of this Rule.~~

11 (d) In ~~Lake Cammack in Alamance County, and~~ Lake Cammack in Alamance County, and Lake Holt in Granville
12 County, ~~the daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass is 10 fish and no more than two fish greater than 14 inches may be~~
13 ~~possessed.~~ there is no daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass, but only five Largemouth Bass greater than 14 inches
14 may be possessed.

15 (e) In Lake Santeetlah in Graham County, there is no daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass
16 less than 14 inches. The daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass greater than 14 inches is five fish
17 in aggregate.

18 (f) In Lake Chatuge in Clay County, the daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Alabama Bass, and
19 Spotted Bass is 10 fish in aggregate. The minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass is 12 inches.

20 (g) The minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass is 14 inches in the following waters:

21 (1) Lake Raleigh in Wake County;

22 (2) Lake Sutton in New Hanover County;

23 (3) Pungo Lake in Washington and Hyde counties;

24 (4) New Lake in Hyde County; and

25 (5) Currituck, Roanoke, Croatan, Albemarle sounds, and their tributaries, including Roanoke River
26 downstream of Roanoke Rapids Dam, Chowan River, Meherrin River, Yeopim River, Pasquotank
27 River, Perquimans River, Little River, Big Flatty Creek, North River, Northwest River,
28 Scuppernong River, Alligator River, including the Alligator/Pungo Canal east of the N.C. Hwy
29 264/45 bridge, and the other associated tributaries and canals in these river systems.

30 (h) In ~~Cane Creek Lake in Union County, and~~ Buckhorn Reservoir in Wilson and Nash counties, the minimum size
31 limit for Largemouth Bass is 16 inches.

32 (i) In Lake Phelps in Tyrrell and Washington counties, the minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass is 14 inches, and
33 no fish between 16 and 20 inches may be possessed.

34 (j) In Lake Hampton in Yadkin County, there is no minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass. No more than two
35 Largemouth Bass less than 14 inches and no Largemouth Bass between 16 and 20 inches may be possessed.

36 (k) In Lake Thom-A-Lex in Davidson County, the minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass is 18 inches.

(l) In the Alleghany County portion of New River downstream of Fields Dam (Grayson County, Virginia), the daily creel limit for Largemouth ~~Bass~~, Bass and Smallmouth ~~Bass~~, ~~and Spotted~~ Bass is five fish in aggregate. There is no minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass, but no fish between 14 and 22 inches in length may be possessed and one Largemouth ~~Bass~~, Bass or Smallmouth ~~Bass~~, ~~or Spotted~~ Bass greater than 22 inches may be possessed.

(m) In Lake Mattamuskeet and associated canals in Hyde County, the minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass is 16 inches and one Largemouth Bass greater than 20 inches may be possessed.

~~(n) In Jean Guite Creek and associated canals within the Town of Southern Shores in Dare County and in the ponds associated with Martin Marietta Park in Craven County, no Largemouth Bass may be possessed.~~

~~(o) In Lake Cammack in Alamance County, there is no daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass, and only five Largemouth Bass greater than 14 inches may be possessed.~~

History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-292;

Eff. February 1, 1976;

Temporary Amendment Eff. May 10, 1990, for a period of 180 days to expire on November 1, 1990;

Temporary Amendment Eff. May 22, 1990, for a period of 168 days to expire on November 1, 1990;

Temporary Amendment Eff. May 1, 1991, for a period of 180 days to expire on November 1, 1991;

Amended Eff. July 1, 1994; July 1, 1993; October 1, 1992;

Temporary Amendment Eff. December 1, 1994 for a period of 180 days or until the permanent rule becomes effective, whichever is sooner;

Amended Eff. July 1, 1998; July 1, 1997; July 1, 1996; July 1, 1995;

Temporary Amendment Eff. November 1, 1998;

Amended Eff. April 1, 1999;

Temporary Amendment Eff. July 1, 1999;

Amended Eff. July 1, 2000;

Temporary Amendment Eff. July 1, 2001;

Temporary Amendment Eff. March 8, 2002 [This rule replaces the rule proposed for permanent amendment effective July 1, 2002 and approved by RRC in May 2001];

Amended Eff. August 1, 2002 (approved by RRC in April 2002);

Temporary Amendment Eff. June 1, 2003;

Amended Eff. June 1, 2004 (this amendment replaces the amendment approved by RRC on July 17, 2003);

Amended Eff. August 1, 2018; August 1, 2017; August 1, 2016; November 1, 2013; August 1, 2012; March 1, 2012; August 1, 2011; August 1, 2010; May 1, 2009; July 1, 2008; May 1, 2008; May 1, 2007; May 1, 2006; June 1, 2005;

Readopted Eff. August 1, 2019;

Amended Eff. August 1, 2026; August 1, 2024; March 15, 2023; August 1, 2021; August 1, 2020.

1 15A NCAC 10C .0314 is proposed for amendment as follows:

2
3 **15A NCAC 10C .0314 STRIPED BASS**

4 (a) The daily creel limit for striped bass and its hybrids is four fish in aggregate, except as otherwise specified in
5 this Rule. in waters identified in Paragraphs (d) and (g) through (l) of this Rule.

6 (b) The minimum size limit for these fish is 20 inches, except as otherwise specified in this Rule. in waters identified
7 in Paragraphs (d) through (l) of this Rule.

8 (c) There is no closed season, except as otherwise specified in this Rule. for waters identified in Paragraphs (i) through
9 (l) of this Rule.

10 (d) In the Dan River upstream from its confluence with Bannister River to the dam at Union Street in Danville, VA
11 and in John H. Kerr Reservoir, the daily creel limit on striped bass and its hybrids is two in aggregate and the minimum
12 size limit is 20 inches. No fish greater than 26 inches may be possessed from October 1 through May 31. From June
13 1 through September 30, the daily creel limit for striped bass and its hybrids is four in aggregate with no minimum
14 size limit.

15 (e) In Lake Gaston and Roanoke Rapids Reservoir, the minimum size limit for striped bass and its hybrids is 20 inches
16 from October 1 through May 31. There is no minimum size limit for these fish from June 1 through September 30.

17 (f) In Farmer Lake, Hyco Lake, Moss Lake, Oak Hollow Lake, ~~Lake Townsend~~, and Salem Lake the minimum size
18 limit for striped bass and its hybrids is 16 inches.

19 (g) In Lake Chatuge in Clay County, the daily creel limit is 15 in the aggregate. There is no minimum size limit, and
20 two may be greater than 22 inches.

21 (h) In Lake Mattamuskeet, and in the Pee Dee River and its tributaries downstream from the Blewett Falls Dam to
22 the South Carolina state line, the daily creel limit for striped bass and its hybrids is three fish in aggregate, and the
23 minimum size limit is 18 inches.

24 (i) In the inland waters of the Tar-Pamlico River and its tributaries upstream of a line shore to shore beginning at a
25 point at Gum Point 35.419448 N 76.758752 W running southwesterly to a point at Fork Point at 35.390755 N 76.77391
26 W and the Neuse River and its tributaries upstream of a line shore to shore beginning at a point at Cooper Point
27 35.035722 N 76.933275 W running southwesterly to a point at Fisher Landing Point 35.002583 N 76.97623 W, the
28 following shall apply:

29 (1) the season for taking and possessing striped bass and striped bass hybrids is April 1 through April
30 30.

31 (2) the daily creel limit for striped bass and striped bass hybrids is one fish in aggregate.

32 (3) it is unlawful to possess a striped bass or striped bass hybrid less than 18 inches or between 22 and
33 27 inches in length.

34 In the inland waters tributary to the Tar-Pamlico River and Neuse River downstream of these lines, the season for
35 taking and possessing striped bass and striped bass hybrids is closed. ~~closed year round.~~

36 ~~(i)~~ (j) In the inland fishing waters of the Tar, Pungo, Neuse, Pungo and Cape Fear rivers and their tributaries extending
37 upstream to the first impoundment of the main course on the river or its tributaries, in other inland fishing waters east

of Interstate 95 not specified in Paragraphs (h), (j), and (k) of this Rule, and in the ponds associated with Martin Marietta Park in Craven County, the season for taking and possessing striped bass is closed year-round.

~~(j)~~(k) In the inland and joint fishing waters of the Roanoke River Striped Bass Management Area, as established in 15A NCAC 03R .0201 and identified in 15A NCAC 10C .0110 which includes the Roanoke, Cashie, Middle, and Eastmost rivers and their tributaries, the open season for taking and possessing striped bass and its hybrids is March 1 through April 30 from the joint-coastal fishing waters boundary at Albemarle Sound upstream to Roanoke Rapids Lake Dam. During the open season, the daily creel limit for striped bass and its hybrids is one fish in aggregate, and the minimum size limit is 18 inches. No fish over 22 inches in length shall be possessed.

~~(k)~~(l) In designated inland and joint fishing waters of Roanoke Sound, Croatan Sound, Albemarle Sound, Chowan River, Currituck Sound, Alligator River, Scuppernong River, and their tributaries, excluding the Roanoke River and Cashie River and their tributaries, the striped bass fishing season, size limits, and creel limits are the same as those established by rules or proclamations of the Marine Fisheries Commission in adjacent coastal fishing waters.

~~(l)~~(m) In accordance with G.S. 113-292, the Executive Director may, by proclamation, suspend or extend the hook-and-line season for striped bass in the inland and joint waters of coastal rivers and their tributaries. It is unlawful to violate the provisions of a proclamation issued pursuant to this authority.

History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-292; 113-304; 113-305;
Eff. November 1, 2013;
Amended Eff. June 1, 2018; August 1, 2016; August 1, 2015; August 1, 2014;
Readopted Eff. August 1, 2019;
Amended Eff. August 1, 2021; August 1, 2020;
Temporary Amendment Eff. November 30, 2021;
Amended Eff. August 1, 2022;
Temporary Amendment Eff. September 1, 2022;
Amended Eff. August 1, 2024; August 1, 2023; March 15, 2023.

15A NCAC 10C .0414 is proposed for amendment as follows:

15A NCAC 10C .0414 BLUEFISH

- (a) The daily creel limit for bluefish is five, ~~three~~.
- (b) There is no size limit.
- (c) There is no closed season.
- (d) Bluefish shall not be sold.

*History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-292; 113-304; 113-305;
Temporary Adoption Eff. September 1, 2022;
Eff. March 15, 2023.*

1 15A NCAC 10C .0425 is proposed for amendment as follows:

3 15A NCAC 10C .0425 SHEEPSHEAD

4 (a) The daily creel limit for sheepshead is ~~40~~ 5 fish.

5 (b) The minimum size limit is ~~10~~ 14 inches.

6 (c) There is no closed season.

7 (d) Sheepshead shall not be sold.

9 *History Note:* Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-292; 113-304; 113-305;

Temporary Adoption Eff. September 1, 2022;

Eff. March 15, 2023.