

Inland Fishing Rule Proposals for 2027-2028

F1. Largemouth Bass – Lake Holt

15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Remove the daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass less than or equal to 14 inches and create a creel limit of 5 fish per day for Largemouth Bass greater than 14 inches at Lake Holt.

JUSTIFICATION

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.

F2. Largemouth Bass – Cane Creek Lake (Union Co.)

15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Remove the 16-inch minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass in Cane Creek Lake. The statewide size restriction will apply where there is no minimum size limit but only two bass may be less than 14 inches.

JUSTIFICATION

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.

F3. Striped Bass & Hybrids – Neuse and Tar-Pamlico River

15A NCAC 10C .0314 STRIPED BASS

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

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.

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JUSTIFICATION

The NC Division of Marine Fisheries will be changing their regulations to provide consistency in coastal waters. This regulation change is part of the cooperative Striped Bass management between the two agencies.

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

F4. Striped Bass & Hybrids – Lake Townsend

15A NCAC 10C .0314 STRIPED BASS

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Increase the minimum size limit for Striped Bass and hybrids in Lake Townsend from 16 inches to 20 inches.

JUSTIFICATION

Striped Bass are no longer being stocked in Lake Townsend and management for the species has stopped 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.

F5. Bluefish – Creel Limit

15A NCAC 10C .0414 BLUEFISH

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Increase the daily creel limit from 3 fish to 5 fish.

JUSTIFICATION

The proposed change 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 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 bag limit increasing from 3 fish to 5 fish.

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F6. Sheepshead – Size and Creel Limit

15A NCAC 10C .0425 SHEEPSHEAD

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Reduce the daily creel limit from 10 fish to 5 fish and increase the minimum size from 10 inches to 14 inches.

JUSTIFICATION

The Division of Marine Fisheries 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.

[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.