



Fiscal Note for 2026-2027 Annual Cycle Rule Proposals Wildlife Resources Commission - Inland Fisheries

Rule Amendments: 15A NCAC 10C .0205 PUBLIC MOUNTAIN TROUT WATERS
15A NCAC 10C .0208 SPAWNING AREAS
15A NCAC 10C .0211 POSSESSION OF CERTAIN FISHES
15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS
15A NCAC 10C .0316 MOUNTAIN TROUT
15A NCAC 10C .0318 WHITE BASS
15A NCAC 10C .0321 SMALLMOUTH BASS
15A NCAC 10C .0322 ALABAMA BASS AND SPOTTED BASS
15A NCAC 10C .0325 SEA TROUT
15A NCAC 10D .0104 FISHING ON GAME LANDS

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

Authority: G.S. 113-134; 113-264; 113-272; 113-274(c)(1c); 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 fish, 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, with the full rule text included in Appendix A. 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 impact to angling participation is expected.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS BY RULE

15A NCAC 10C .0205 PUBLIC MOUNTAIN TROUT

The WRC manages approximately 5,300 miles and 2,100 acres of the State's coldwater resources within its Public Mountain Trout Waters (PMTW) program, and in 2022 an estimated 369,968 anglers fished for trout in PMTW and contributed approximately \$1.38 billion to the State's economy.¹ As noted within the WRC's Trout Management Plan, the purpose of PMTW is to use science-based decision making and biologically sound management principles to enhance the quality and quantity of trout populations for continued and varied angling opportunities. By designating waters as PMTW, the WRC is able to enact biologically sound management that ensures the conservation and wise use of trout resources (including efforts focused on the State's only native salmonid: Brook Trout), increase awareness of angling opportunities, invest in infrastructure that provides angling access to all anglers regardless of physical ability, produce and stock approximately 1 million trout annually to provide fisheries, and partner with local (municipalities and counties), state (North Carolina State Parks and North Carolina Forest Service), and federal entities (United States Forest Service) to manage important ecological, cultural, and economic resources.

The proposed amendments will modify the list of waters designated as PMTW and further classified as Hatchery Supported Trout or Wild Trout Waters. To reflect changes in partnerships with landowners and angler access, approximately 1.3 miles of Hatchery Supported Trout Waters will be removed and approximately 1.2 miles will be reclassified from Hatchery Supported Trout Waters to Wild Trout Waters. Changes to PMTW boundaries are necessary to accurately define the segments being stocked and to clarify designations based upon partnerships with landowners, angler access, and overall trout management.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendments modifying the classification of PMTWs will not change on-the-ground management activities. Conservation biologists will change signage as part of their regular duties. The change in signage will not require more than one day, at an estimated one-time cost to the agency of approximately \$212 (\$53/hr x 4 hrs = \$212)². New signage will cost the agency approximately \$9 (\$0.90/sign x 10 signs). The total one-time cost to the agency is estimated to be approximately \$219 (\$212 + \$9 = \$219).

¹ Evaluation of North Carolina Trout Anglers' Opinions, Participation and Socioeconomic Impact, 2023.

² Cost calculated using total compensation based on midpoint of Conservation Biologist classification.

Local Impact

The proposed amendments have no anticipated local government impact.

Private Impact

Changes to PMTW boundaries will result in a net loss of approximately 1.3 miles of PMTW from public access. While this will be a loss of angling opportunity to the public in specific areas, it represents only 0.02% of the total PMTW.

The WRC does not have a mechanism to determine the specific fiscal impact of the proposed changes to private individuals. These changes will affect anglers' ability to use natural bait. In general, fewer people use natural bait compared to artificial in these specific streams. By not allowing natural bait, catch and release mortality decreases, leaving more fish in the water to be caught. The loss of 1.3 miles of PMTW could reduce fishing activity within the specific waterbodies. However, overall participation in recreational fishing is not expected to decline as a result of the changes because it is expected that anglers will shift their fishing effort to other PMTW waterbodies.

15A NCAC 10C .0316 MOUNTAIN TROUT

The proposed amendments broaden the eligibility criteria for reservoirs that can be designated for year-round trout fishing in Hatchery Supported Trout Waters. Previously, only reservoirs used specifically for hydropower generation or as municipal water supplies were eligible for this exception to closed fishing seasons. By removing this requirement, the amendments will allow reservoirs like Cullowhee Dam (from the S. Wayehutta Road bridge to the Cullowhee Dam) in Jackson County -- which no longer serves as a municipal water supply -- to be added to the list of reservoirs open to trout fishing year-round. This change increases flexibility in managing fishing access and expands opportunities for anglers.

Cullowhee Dam impounds the Tuckasegee River in the Town of Cullowhee and was used for water supply until a few years ago. Previously, the no closed season exception was applied to the Cullowhee Dam Impoundment, but due to the change in operation, the impoundment was not specifically listed in Rule .0316. Allowing fishing year-round within the impoundment will alleviate confusion among anglers who were accustomed to fishing the impoundment previously without a closed season and provide additional angling opportunities without negatively impacting trout populations.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendments are expected to have no state impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require additional staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

The proposed amendments have no anticipated local government impact.

Private Impact

The proposed amendments are expected to have minimal impacts on private entities. The change will alleviate confusion among anglers and allow for additional angling opportunities. This change is not expected to negatively impact fish populations. The WRC does not have a mechanism to quantify the specific fiscal impacts of the proposed change.

15A NCAC 10C .0208 SPAWNING AREAS

The proposed amendment prohibits 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.

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. Closure of the Kings Bridge slough to fishing during the Muskellunge spawning season would prevent targeted angling, catch and release mortality, and potential harvest during their spawning period.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have no state impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require additional staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impact.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have minimal impacts on private entities. The prohibition on fishing during the spawning season will briefly decrease angling opportunities in a limited area; however, the change is not expected to impact overall participation in fishing. Muskellunge stocking, public access, and fishing in the mainstem of the French Broad River will not be impacted. This change is expected to positively impact fish populations. The WRC does not have a mechanism to quantify the specific fiscal impacts of the proposed change.

15A NCAC 10C .0211 POSSESSION OF CERTAIN FISHES

The proposed amendment adds the Asian Pond Mussel (any species of the genus *Sinanodonta*) and Golden Mussel (any species of the genus *Limnoperna*) to the list of species that are unlawful to transport, purchase, possess, sell, or stock in the public or private waters of North Carolina.

Although neither species has been found in NC waters, the Asian pond mussel has been found in New Jersey, and the Golden Pond Mussel has been found in California. Introductions outside of their native range have caused extensive ecological and economic harm. Both species cause rapid changes in benthic communities and threaten native biodiversity through negative impacts on aquatic food chains. Additionally, they have been known to negatively impact the water supply systems of many water-treatment plants, industrial refrigeration systems, and power stations.

The proposed amendment helps prevent these species from being introduced into NC waters by allowing WRC law enforcement to confiscate Asian Pond Mussels and Golden Mussels and charge individuals when appropriate. Additionally, permits for importation will not be issued under the proposed amendment.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have no state impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require additional staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impact.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated impact on private entities in the near term. Neither species is currently found in NC waters and have no known human uses within the U.S.^{3,4}. There are likely long term environmental and economic benefits from preventing harm associated with these species.

15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS

The proposed amendments remove the daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass in Lake Cammack, Alamance County, and increase the number of Largemouth Bass over 14 inches that anglers may possess from two to five. Eliminating the daily creel limit for Lake Cammack Largemouth Bass is expected to improve the currently stunted Largemouth Bass population which will, in turn, improve angler satisfaction. Changing the size restriction is intended to increase angler satisfaction and promote bass harvest while still protecting some of the largest bass.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendments are expected to have no state impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require additional staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

The proposed amendments have no anticipated local government impact.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have minimal impacts on private entities. The changes will allow for additional angling opportunities. This change is not expected to negatively impact fish populations. The WRC does not have a mechanism to quantify the specific fiscal impacts of the proposed change.

SPOTTED BASS AMENDMENTS

15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS

15A NCAC 10C .0321 SMALLMOUTH BASS

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

³ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Chinese Pond Mussel Ecological Risk Screening Summary

⁴ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Golden Mussel Ecological Risk Screening Summary

Proposed amendments remove the daily creel limit, 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).

Size and creel limits have been removed for Spotted Bass in both North Carolina and Virginia. The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources jointly manage this section of the New River with WRC because it meanders between each state multiple times. This change will make bass size and creel limits on the New River consistent with other rules in North Carolina and Virginia. The change is not expected to negatively impact Spotted Bass populations. Additionally, the change is expected to make compliance easier for anglers and law enforcement.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have no state impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require additional staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impact.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have minimal impacts on private entities. The change will alleviate confusion among anglers and allow for additional angling opportunities. This change is not expected to negatively impact fish populations. The WRC does not have a mechanism to quantify the specific fiscal impacts of the proposed change.

15A NCAC 10C .0318 WHITE BASS

The proposed amendment removes the minimum size limit of 14 inches for White Bass.

The minimum size limit of 14 inches and a daily creel limit of 10 fish was established in 2017. The goal was to protect White Bass up to two years old and to increase the size and age structure of these populations. Since that time, staff have routinely surveyed White Bass populations and results from 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 been effective in increasing the size structure of the White Bass population.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have no state impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require additional staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impact.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have minimal impacts on private entities. The change will allow for additional angling opportunities. This change is not expected to negatively impact fish populations. The WRC does not have a mechanism to quantify the specific fiscal impacts of the proposed change.

15A NCAC 10C .0325 SEA TROUT

The proposed amendments 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.

The 2022 Stock Assessment of Spotted Seatrout in Virginia and North Carolina Waters prepared by the NC Division of Marine Fisheries suggests Sea Trout are currently experiencing overfishing. This change is designed to decrease overfishing and protect spawning individuals, while maintaining consistency in Spotted Sea Trout regulations across inland, joint, and coastal fishing waters.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have no state impact as the change is part of routine fisheries management and will not require additional staff time or resources for implementation and enforcement.

Local Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impact.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have minimal impacts on private entities. Changes to creel and size limits will decrease the number of fish anglers can legally harvest by one fish.

However, the change should alleviate confusion among anglers and establish consistency in the Sea Trout rules across inland, joint, and coastal fishing waters. This change is expected to positively impact fish populations. The WRC does not have a mechanism to quantify the specific fiscal impacts of the proposed change.

15A NCAC 10D .0104 FISHING ON GAME LANDS

The proposed amendments designate the currently unclassified waters located on South Mountains Game Land in Burke and McDowell counties as Public Mountain Trout Waters and further classifies them as Wild Trout Waters, and incorporates technical corrections for improved rule clarity.

Wild Trout Waters regulations already apply to waters on South Mountain Game Land in Cleveland and Rutherford counties. This change will clarify that Wild Trout Waters regulations apply to waters on the entire game land. The Wild Trout Waters designation includes the following accompanying regulations: creel limit reduced from seven to four, minimum size limit of seven inches, and artificial lure with single hook only.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendment that modifies the designation of PMTWs will not change on-the-ground management activities. New signage will not be posted as all Public Mountain Trout Waters on South Mountains Game Land are Wild Trout Waters by default.

Local Impact

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impact.

Private Impact

The proposed amendment is expected to have minimal impact on private entities. The change is expected to alleviate confusion among anglers and will impact angler opportunity. However, Wild Trout Waters protect native species by limiting take (size, creel and method) and by not allowing natural bait, catch and release mortality decreases, leaving more fish in the water to be caught. The WRC does not have a mechanism to quantify the specific fiscal impacts of the proposed change.

1 **15A NCAC 10C .0205 PUBLIC MOUNTAIN TROUT WATERS**

2 (a) For purposes of this Rule, the following definitions apply:

- 3 (1) "Natural bait" means a living or dead plant or animal, or parts thereof, or prepared substances
4 designed to attract fish by the sense of taste or smell.
- 5 (2) "Single hook" means a fish hook with only one point.
- 6 (3) "Artificial lure" means a fishing lure that neither contains nor has been treated by a substance that
7 attracts fish by the sense of taste or smell.
- 8 (4) "Artificial fly" means one single hook dressed with feathers, hair, thread, tinsel, rubber, or a similar
9 material to which no additional hook, spinner, spoon, or similar device is added.
- 10 (5) "Youth anglers" are individuals under ~~18~~ 16 years of age.

11 (b) For purposes of this Rule, 15A NCAC 10C .0316, and 15A NCAC 10D .0104, the following classifications apply:

- 12 (1) "Public Mountain Trout Waters" are the waters included in this Rule and those designated in 15A
13 NCAC 10D .0104.
- 14 (2) "Catch and Release Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters" are Public Mountain Trout Waters
15 where only artificial flies and lures having one single hook may be used. No trout may be possessed
16 or harvested while fishing these streams. Waters with this designation include tributaries unless
17 otherwise noted.
- 18 (3) "Delayed Harvest Trout Waters" are Public Mountain Trout Waters where between October 1 and
19 one-half hour after sunset on the Friday before the first Saturday of the following June, it is unlawful
20 to possess natural bait, use more than one single hook on an artificial lure, or harvest or possess trout
21 while fishing. From 6:00 a.m. until noon on the first Saturday in June, only youth anglers may fish
22 and these waters have no bait or lure restrictions. From noon on the first Saturday in June until
23 October 1, anglers may fish these waters with no bait or lure restrictions. Waters with this
24 designation do not include tributaries unless otherwise noted.
- 25 (4) "Hatchery Supported Trout Waters" are Public Mountain Trout Waters that have no bait or lure
26 restrictions. Waters with this designation do not include tributaries unless otherwise noted.
- 27 (5) "Special Regulation Trout Waters" are Public Mountain Trout Waters where watercourse-specific
28 regulations apply. Waters with this designation do not include tributaries unless otherwise noted.
- 29 (6) "Wild Trout Waters" are Public Mountain Trout Waters identified in this Rule or 15A NCAC 10D
30 .0104. Only artificial lures having only one single hook may be used. No person shall possess natural
31 bait while fishing these waters. Waters with this designation do not include tributaries unless
32 otherwise noted.
- 33 (7) "Undesignated Waters" are the other waters in the State. These waters have no bait or lure
34 restrictions.

35 (c) Seasons, creel, and size limits. Seasons, creel, and size limits for trout are listed in Rule .0316 of this Subchapter.

(d) Classifications. This Paragraph designates waters in each county that have a specific classification. Waters on game lands are designated in 15A NCAC 10D .0104, unless otherwise indicated in this Paragraph. The other waters are classified as Undesignated Waters.

(1) Alleghany

(A) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:

Big Pine Creek

Bledsoe Creek

Brush Creek from the N.C. 21 bridge to the confluence with the Little River, except where posted against trespassing

Cranberry Creek

Glade Creek

Little River from 400 yards upstream of the S.R. 1128 bridge, marked by a sign on each bank, to McCann Dam

Meadow Fork

Pine Swamp Creek

Piney Fork

Prathers Creek

(B) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:

The waters located on Stone Mountain State Park

(2) Ashe County

(A) Catch and Release Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters are as follows:

Big Horse Creek from the Virginia state line to Mud Creek at S.R. 1363, excluding tributaries

(B) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:

Big Horse Creek from the S.R. 1324 bridge to the North Fork New River

Helton Creek from 900 yards upstream of the S.R. 1372 bridge, marked by a sign on both banks to a point adjacent to intersection of N.C. 16 and S.R. 1536

South Fork New River from the upstream end of Todd Island to the S.R. 1351 bridge
Trout Lake

(C) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:

Beaver Creek from N.C. 221 to the confluence of Beaver Creek and South Beaver Creek

Big Horse Creek from Mud Creek at S.R. 1363 to the S.R. 1324 bridge

Big Laurel Creek from the S.R. 1315 bridge to the confluence with the North Fork New River

Buffalo Creek from the S.R. 1133 bridge to the N.C. 194-88 bridge

Cranberry Creek from the Alleghany Co. line to the South Fork New River

Nathans Creek

- 1 North Fork New River from the Watauga Co. line to Sharp Dam
2 Old Fields Creek from N.C. 221 to the South Fork New River
3 Peak Creek from the upper boundary of the NCDA-NCSU Upper Mountain Research
4 Station to Trout Lake
5 Roan Creek
6 Three Top Creek
7 (3) Avery County
8 (A) Catch and Release Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters are as follows:
9 Elk River, the portion on Lees-McRae College property, excluding the millpond
10 Lost Cove Creek, the game land portion, excluding Gragg Prong and Rockhouse Creek
11 Wilson Creek, the game land portion
12 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
13 Boyde Coffey Lake
14 Elk River from the S.R. 1305 crossing immediately upstream of Big Falls to the Tennessee
15 state line
16 Linville River from S.R. 1504 to the Blue Ridge Parkway boundary line, except where
17 posted against trespassing
18 Milltimber Creek
19 North Toe River from Watauga St. to Roby Shoemaker Wetlands and Family Recreational
20 Park, except where posted against trespassing
21 North Toe River from S.R. 1164 to Mitchell Co. line, except where posted against
22 trespassing
23 Squirrel Creek
24 Wildcat Lake
25 (C) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:
26 Birchfield Creek
27 Cow Camp Creek
28 Cranberry Creek from the headwaters to the U.S. 19E, N.C. 194, bridge
29 Gragg Prong
30 Horse Creek
31 Kentucky Creek
32 North Harper Creek
33 Plumtree Creek
34 Roaring Creek
35 Rockhouse Creek
36 Shawneehaw Creek, the portion adjacent to Banner Elk Greenway
37 South Harper Creek

- 1 Webb Prong
- 2 (4) Buncombe County
- 3 (A) Catch and Release Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters are as follows:
- 4 Carter Creek, the game land portion
- 5 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
- 6 Bent Creek from ~~the headwaters~~ Rich Branch to the N.C. Arboretum boundary line
- 7 Cane Creek from ~~the headwaters~~ S.R. 2785 bridge to the S.R. 3138 bridge
- 8 ~~Corner Rock Creek from Little Andy Creek to the confluence with Walker Branch~~
- 9 Dillingham Creek from Corner Rock Creek to Ivy Creek
- 10 Ivy Creek from Dillingham Creek to the U.S. 19-23 bridge
- 11 Lake Powhatan
- 12 Reems Creek from Sugar Camp Fork to the U.S. 19-23 bridge, except where posted against
- 13 trespassing
- 14 ~~Rich Branch from downstream of the confluence with Rocky Branch~~
- 15 Stony Creek from the confluence of Carter Creek and Mineral Creek downstream to
- 16 Dillingham Creek
- 17 Swannanoa from ~~the S.R. 2702 bridge near Ridgecrest~~ River Walk Park in Black Mountain
- 18 to the Wood Avenue bridge, at the intersection of N.C. 81 and U.S. 74A in Asheville,
- 19 except where posted against trespassing
- 20 (5) Burke County
- 21 (A) Catch and Release Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters are as follows:
- 22 Henry Fork, the portion on South Mountains State Park
- 23 (B) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
- 24 Jacob Fork from Shinny Creek to the lower South Mountains State Park boundary
- 25 (C) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
- 26 Carroll Creek, the game land portion above S.R. 1405
- 27 ~~Henry Fork from the lower South Mountain State Park line to S.R. 1919 at Ivy Creek~~
- 28 Linville River, ~~the portion within Linville Gorge Wilderness area and~~ the portion below
- 29 Lake James powerhouse from the upstream bridge on S.R. 1223 to Muddy Creek
- 30 (D) Special Regulation Trout Waters are as follows:
- 31 Catawba River from Muddy Creek to the City of Morganton water intake dam
- 32 (E) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:
- 33 The waters located on South Mountains State Park, except those waters identified in Parts
- 34 (A) and (B) of this Subparagraph
- 35 (6) Caldwell County
- 36 (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
- 37 Wilson Creek, the game land portion below Lost Cove Creek to Philips Branch

- 1 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
2 Boone Fork Pond
3 Buffalo Creek from the mouth of Joes Creek to McCloud Branch
4 Joes Creek from the first falls upstream of S.R. 1574 to the confluence with Buffalo Creek
5 Wilson Creek from Phillips Branch to Brown Mountain Beach Dam, except where posted
6 against trespassing
7 Yadkin River from the Happy Valley Ruritan Community Park to S.R. 1515
8 (C) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:
9 Buffalo Creek from the Watauga Co. line to Long Ridge Branch including game land
10 tributaries
11 Joes Creek from the Watauga Co. line to the first falls upstream of the end of S.R. 1574
12 Rockhouse Creek
13 (7) Cherokee County
14 (A) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
15 Davis Creek from the confluence of Bald Creek and Dockery Creek to Hanging Dog Creek
16 Hyatt Creek from Big Dam Branch to the Valley River
17 Junaluska Creek from Ashturn Creek to the Valley River
18 Shuler Creek from the Joe Brown Hwy, S.R. 1325 bridge, to the Tennessee state line
19 Valley River from S.R. 1359 to the U.S. 19 Business bridge in Murphy
20 (B) Special Regulation Trout Waters are as follows:
21 Apalachia Reservoir
22 (8) Clay County
23 (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
24 Fires Creek from Rockhouse Creek to the foot bridge in the USFS Fires Creek Picnic Area
25 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
26 Buck Creek, the game land portion downstream of the U.S. 64 bridge
27 Fires Creek from the foot bridge in the USFS Fires Creek Picnic Area to S.R. 1300
28 Tusquitee Creek from Compass Creek to the lower S.R. 1300 bridge
29 (9) Graham County
30 (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
31 Snowbird Creek from the USFS footbridge at the old railroad junction to USFS Rd. 2579
32 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
33 Calderwood Reservoir from Cheoah Dam to the Tennessee state line
34 Cheoah Reservoir
35 Panther Creek from the confluence of Stand Creek and Rock Creek to Lake Fontana
36 Santeetlah Creek from Johns Branch to Lake Santeetlah
37 Snowbird Creek from USFS Rd. 2579 to the S.R. 1127 bridge

- 1 Stecoah Creek from the upper game land boundary to Lake Fontana
2 Tulula Creek from S.R. 1201 to the lower bridge on S.R. 1275
3 West Buffalo Creek from the confluence of Squally Creek and Little Buffalo Creek
4 downstream to Lake Santeetlah
5 Yellow Creek from Lake Santeetlah hydropower pipeline to the Cheoah River
6 (C) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:
7 Little Buffalo Creek
8 South Fork Squally Creek
9 Squally Creek
10 (10) Haywood County
11 (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
12 West Fork Pigeon River from Queen Creek to the first game land boundary upstream of
13 Lake Logan
14 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
15 Cold Springs Creek from Fall Branch to the Pigeon River
16 Jonathan Creek from upstream of the S.R. 1302 bridge to the Pigeon River, except where
17 posted against trespassing
18 Pigeon River from Stamey Cove Branch to the upstream U.S. 19-23 bridge
19 Richland Creek from the Russ Avenue, U.S. 276, bridge to the U.S. 19 bridge
20 West Fork Pigeon River from Tom Creek to Queen Creek
21 (11) Henderson County
22 (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
23 North Fork Mills River, the game land portion below the Hendersonville watershed dam
24 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
25 Broad River from the end of S.R. 1611 to the Rutherford Co. line
26 Cane Creek from the railroad bridge upstream of the S.R. 1551 bridge to the U.S. 25 bridge
27 Clear Creek from Laurel Fork to S.R. 1582
28 Green River from the Lake Summit powerhouse to the game land boundary
29 Hungry River from ~~S.R. 1885~~ Little Hungry River to the Green River
30 (12) Jackson County
31 (A) Catch and Release Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters are as follows:
32 Flat Creek
33 Tuckasegee River, the game land portion upstream of Tanasee Creek Lake, including the
34 Duke Energy powerline corridor
35 Tuckasegee River the portion upstream from the Clark property
36 (B) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:

- 1 Tuckasegee River from downstream of the N.C. 107 bridge to the falls located 275 yards
2 upstream of the U.S. 23-441 bridge, marked by a sign on both banks
- 3 (C) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
4 Balsam Lake
5 Bear Creek Lake
6 Cedar Cliff Lake
7 Cullowhee Creek from Tilley Creek to the Tuckasegee River
8 Dark Ridge Creek from Jones Creek to Scott Creek
9 Greens Creek from Greens Creek Baptist Church on S.R. 1370 to Savannah Creek
10 Savannah Creek from Shell Branch to Cagle Branch
11 Scott Creek from Dark Ridge Creek to the Tuckasegee River, except where posted against
12 trespassing
13 Tanasee Creek Lake
14 Tuckasegee River from John Brown Branch to the downstream N.C. 107 bridge
15 Tuckasegee River from the falls located 275 yards upstream of the U.S. 23-441 bridge,
16 marked by a sign on both banks, to the S.R. 1534 bridge at Wilmont
17 Wolf Creek Lake
- 18 (D) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:
19 Gage Creek
20 North Fork Scott Creek
21 Tanasee Creek
22 Whitewater River from Silver Run Creek to the South Carolina state line
23 Wolf Creek except Balsam Lake and Wolf Creek Lake
- 24 (13) Macon County
- 25 (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
26 Nantahala River from Whiteoak Creek to the Nantahala hydropower discharge canal
- 27 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
28 Burningtown Creek from Left Prong to the Little Tennessee River
29 Cartoogechaye Creek from downstream of the U.S. 64 bridge to the Little Tennessee River
30 Cliffside Lake
31 Cullasaja River from Sequoyah Dam to the U.S. 64 bridge near the junction of S.R. 1672
32 Nantahala River from Dicks Creek to Whiteoak Creek
33 Nantahala River from the Nantahala hydropower discharge canal to the Swain Co. line
34 Queens Creek Lake
- 35 (14) Madison County
- 36 (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
37 Big Laurel Creek from the N.C. 208 bridge to the U.S. 25-70 bridge

Shelton Laurel Creek from the N.C. 208 bridge at Belva to the confluence with Big Laurel Creek

Spring Creek from the N.C. 209 bridge at the Hot Springs city limits to the iron bridge at end of Andrews Ave.

(B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:

Big Laurel Creek from Puncheon Fork to the S.R. 1318, Big Laurel Rd., bridge downstream of Bearpen Branch

Big Pine Creek from the S.R. 1151 bridge to the French Broad River

Little Ivy Creek from the confluence of Middle Fork and Paint Fork at Beech Glen to the confluence with Ivy Creek at Forks of Ivy

Max Patch Pond

Meadow Fork Creek from Meadow Fork Campground to Spring Creek

Puncheon Fork from Wolf Laurel Branch to Big Laurel Creek

Roaring Fork from Fall Branch to Meadow Fork

Shelton Laurel Creek from the confluence of Big Creek and Mill Creek to the N.C. 208 bridge at Belva

Shut-in Creek from the confluence of East Fork Shut-in Creek and West Fork Shut-in Creek to the French Broad River

Spillcorn Creek from Baker Creek to the S.R. 1330 bridge

Spring Creek from the junction of N.C. 209 and N.C. 63 to the confluence with Meadow Fork

West Fork Shut-in Creek from the lower game land boundary to the confluence with East Fork Shut-in Creek

(15) McDowell County

(A) Catch and Release Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters are as follows:

Newberry Creek, the game land portion

(B) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:

Catawba River, the portion adjacent to the Marion Greenway

Curtis Creek, the game land portion downstream of the USFS boundary at Deep Branch

Mill Creek from the U.S. 70 bridge to the I-40 bridge

(C) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:

Armstrong Creek from the Cato Holler line downstream to the upper Greenlee line

Catawba River from the Catawba Falls Campground to the Old Fort Recreation Park

Little Buck Creek, the game land portion

North Fork Catawba River from the headwaters to North Cove School at the S.R. 1569 bridge

(16) Mitchell County

- (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
Cane Creek from the N.C. 226 bridge to the S.R. 1189 bridge
North Toe River from the U.S. 19E bridge to the N.C. 226 bridge
- (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
Big Rock Creek from the headwaters to ~~the N.C. 226 bridge at the S.R. 1307 intersection~~
the S.R. 1325 bridge
Cane Creek from S.R. 1219 to the N.C. 226 bridge
East Fork Grassy Creek
Grassy Creek from East Fork Grassy Creek to the mouth
~~Little Rock Creek from the Green Creek bridge to Big Rock Creek, except where posted~~
~~against trespassing~~
North Toe River from the Avery Co. line to the S.R. 1121 bridge
- (C) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:
Green Creek from the headwaters to the Green Creek bridge, except where posted against trespassing
Little Rock Creek the portion upstream of the Green Creek bridge, including the tributaries, except where posted against trespassing
Wiles Creek from the game land boundary to the mouth
- (17) Polk County
- (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
Green River from the Fishtop Falls Access Area to the confluence with Cove Creek
- (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
Green River from the mouth of Cove Creek to the natural gas pipeline crossing
North Pacolet River from Joels Creek to the N.C. 108 bridge
- (18) Rutherford County
- (A) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
Broad River from the Henderson Co. line to the U.S. 64/74 bridge, except where posted against trespassing
- (19) Stokes County
- (A) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
Dan River from the Virginia state line downstream to a point 200 yards below the end of S.R. 1421
- (20) Surry County
- (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
Ararat River, the portion adjacent to the Ararat River Greenway downstream of the N.C. 103 bridge

- 1 Mitchell River from 0.6 miles upstream of the end of S.R. 1333 to the lowermost bridge
2 on S.R. 1330
- 3 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
4 ~~Ararat River from the S.R. 1727 bridge to~~ River, the portion adjacent to the Ararat River
5 Greenway upstream of the N.C. 103 bridge
6 Big Elkin Creek from the dam 440 yards upstream of the N.C. 268 bridge to a point 265
7 yards downstream of N.C. 268, marked by a sign on both banks
8 Fisher River from the Virginia state line to the I-77 bridge
9 Little Fisher River from the Virginia state line to the N.C. 89 bridge
10 Lovills Creek from the U.S. 52 Business bridge to the Ararat River
11 Pauls Creek from the Virginia state line to 0.3 miles below the S.R. 1625 bridge
- 12 (21) Swain County
- 13 (A) Delayed Harvest Waters Trout Waters are as follows:
14 Tuckasegee River from the U.S. 19 bridge to the Slope Street bridge
- 15 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
16 Alarka Creek from the game land boundary to Fontana Reservoir
17 Calderwood Reservoir from Cheoah Dam to the Tennessee state line
18 Cheoah Reservoir
19 Connelly Creek from Camp Branch to the Tuckasegee River
20 Deep Creek from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Boundary line to the
21 Tuckasegee River
22 Nantahala River from the Macon Co. line to the existing Fontana Lake water level
- 23 (22) Transylvania County
- 24 (A) Catch and Release Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters are as follows:
25 Davidson River from the headwaters to Avery Creek, excluding Avery Creek, Looking
26 Glass Creek, Grogan Creek, Cedar Rock Creek and John Rock Branch
- 27 (B) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
28 East Fork French Broad River from East Fork Baptist Church to ~~the~~ 350 yards downstream
29 ~~S.R. 1107 of Whitmire Falls, marked by a sign on both banks~~ bridge
30 Little River from the confluence of Lake Dense to 100 yards downstream of Hooker Falls
- 31 (C) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
32 Davidson River from Avery Creek to the lower USFS boundary
33 French Broad River from the confluence of the North Fork French Broad River and West
34 Fork
35 French Broad River to the Island Ford Rd., S.R. 1110, Access Area
36 Middle Fork French Broad River from upstream of the U.S. 178 bridge to the French Broad
37 River

- 1 West Fork French Broad River from S.R. 1312 to confluence with North Fork French
2 Broad River
- 3 (D) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:
4 The waters located on Gorges State Park
5 Whitewater River from Silver Run Creek to the South Carolina state line
- 6 (23) Watauga County
- 7 (A) Catch and Release Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters are as follows:
8 Laurel Creek from the confluence of North Fork Laurel Creek and South Fork Laurel Creek
9 to Elk Creek, excluding tributaries
10 Pond Creek from the headwaters to the Locust Ridge Rd. bridge, excluding the pond
11 adjacent to Coffee Lake
- 12 (B) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
13 Lake Coffey
14 Watauga River from the S.R. 1114 bridge to the Valle Crucis Community Park lower
15 boundary
16 Watauga River from the S.R. 1103 bridge to the confluence with Laurel Creek
- 17 (C) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
18 Beaverdam Creek from the confluence of Beaverdam Creek and Little Beaverdam Creek
19 to an unnamed tributary adjacent to the intersection of S.R. 1201 and S.R. 1203
20 Beech Creek
21 Buckeye Creek from Buckeye Creek Reservoir dam to Grassy Gap Creek
22 Buckeye Creek Reservoir
23 Cove Creek from the S.R. 1233 bridge at Zionville to the S.R. 1214 bridge at Sherwood
24 Dutch Creek from the second S.R. 1136 bridge to the mouth
25 Elk Creek from the S.R. 1510 bridge at Triplett to the Wilkes Co. line, except where posted
26 against trespassing
27 Laurel Creek from the S.R. 1123 bridge at the S.R. 1157 intersection to the Watauga River
28 Meat Camp Creek from the S.R. 1340 bridge at the S.R. 1384 intersection to N.C. 194
29 Middle Fork New River from adjacent to the intersection of S.R. 1539 and U.S. 321 to the
30 South Fork New River
31 Norris Fork Creek
32 South Fork New River from the canoe launch 70 yards upstream of U.S. 421 bridge to the
33 lower boundary of Brookshire Park
34 Stony Fork from the S.R. 1500 bridge at the S.R. 1505 intersection to the Wilkes Co. line
- 35 (D) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:
36 Dutch Creek from the headwaters to the second S.R. 1136 bridge
37 Howard Creek

- 1 Maine Branch from the headwaters to the North Fork New River
2 North Fork New River from the confluence with Maine Branch and Mine Branch to the
3 Ashe Co. line
4 Winkler Creek from the lower bridge on S.R. 1549 to the confluence with the South Fork
5 New River
6 (24) Wilkes County
7 (A) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
8 East Prong Roaring River from Bullhead Creek to the Stone Mountain State Park lower
9 boundary
10 Elk Creek from the Watauga Co. line to the lower boundary of the Blue Ridge Mountain
11 Club
12 Elk Creek, the portion on Leatherwood Mountains development
13 Reddies River from the Town of North Wilkesboro water intake dam to the confluence
14 with the Yadkin River
15 Stone Mountain Creek from the falls at the Alleghany Co. line to the confluence with the
16 East Prong Roaring River and Bullhead Creek
17 (B) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
18 Basin Creek from the S.R. 1730 bridge to the confluence with Lovelace Creek
19 Bell Branch Pond
20 Boundary Line Pond
21 Cub Creek from 0.5 miles upstream of the S.R. 2460 bridge to the S.R. 1001 bridge
22 Darnell Creek from the downstream ford on S.R. 1569 to the confluence with the North
23 Fork Reddies River
24 East Prong Roaring River from the Stone Mountain State Park lower boundary to the Low
25 Meadows Lane bridge
26 Fall Creek from the S.R. 1300 bridge to the confluence with South Prong Lewis Fork,
27 except where posted against trespassing
28 Middle Fork Reddies River from the headwaters to the bridge on S.R. 1580
29 Middle Prong Roaring River from the headwaters to the second bridge on S.R. 1736
30 North Fork Reddies River from the headwaters to the Union School bridge on S.R. 1559
31 Pike Creek
32 Pike Creek Pond
33 South Fork Reddies River from the S.R. 1355 bridge to the confluence with the Middle
34 Fork Reddies River
35 South Prong Lewis Fork from Fall Creek to the U.S. 421 bridge adjacent to the S.R. 1155
36 intersection
37 (C) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:

- 1 The waters located on Stone Mountain State Park, except East Prong Roaring River from
2 Bullhead Creek to the Stone Mountain State Park lower boundary where Delayed Harvest
3 Trout Waters regulations apply, and Stone Mountain Creek from the falls at the Alleghany
4 Co. line to the confluence with the East Prong Roaring River and Bullhead Creek in Stone
5 Mountain State Park where Delayed Harvest Trout Waters regulations apply
- 6 (25) Yancey County
- 7 (A) Catch and Release Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters are as follows:
8 South Toe River from the headwaters to Upper Creek
9 Upper Creek
- 10 (B) Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are as follows:
11 Cane River from Blackberry Ridge Rd. to the downstream boundary of Cane River County
12 Park
- 13 (C) Hatchery Supported Trout Waters are as follows:
14 Bald Mountain Creek, except where posted against trespassing
15 Cane River from Bee Branch, S.R. 1110, to Bowlens Creek
16 Price Creek from the junction of S.R. 1120 and S.R. 1121 to Indian Creek
17 South Toe River from Clear Creek to the lower boundary line of Yancey Co. Recreation
18 Park, except where posted against trespassing
- 19 (D) Wild Trout Waters are as follows:
20 Cattail Creek from the bridge at Mountain Farm Community Rd. to the N.C. 197 bridge
21 Lickskillet Creek
22 Middle Creek from the game land boundary to the mouth

23

24 *History Note: Authority G.S. 113-272; 113-292;*
25 *Eff. February 1, 1976;*
26 *Amended Eff. July 1, 1998; July 1, 1997; July 1, 1996; July 1, 1995; July 1, 1994; July 1, 1993;*
27 *October 1, 1992;*
28 *Temporary Amendment Eff. July 1, 1999;*
29 *Amended Eff. July 1, 2000;*
30 *Temporary Amendment Eff. July 1, 2001;*
31 *Temporary Amendment Eff. July 1, 2002;*
32 *Amended Eff. August 1, 2002 (approved by RRC on 6/21/01 and 04/18/02);*
33 *Temporary Amendment Eff. June 1, 2003;*
34 *Amended Eff. June 1, 2004 (this amendment replaces the amendment approved by RRC on July 17,*
35 *2003);*

1 *Amended Eff. August 1, 2018; August 1, 2017; August 1, 2016; August 1, 2015; August 1, 2014;*
2 *August 1, 2013; August 1, 2012; August 1, 2011; August 1, 2010; May 1, 2009; May 1, 2008; May*
3 *1, 2007; May 1, 2006; June 1, 2005;*
4 *Readopted Eff. August 1, 2019;*
5 *Amended Eff. August 1, 2025; August 1, 2024; August 1, 2023; August 1, 2022; August 1, 2021;*
6 *August 1, 2020.*

15A NCAC 10C .0316 MOUNTAIN TROUT

(a) The daily creel limit for trout in Hatchery-Supported Trout Waters is seven fish. There is no minimum size limit for these fish. The open season is from 7 a.m. on the first Saturday in April until March 1, except for waters designated in Paragraph (g) of this Rule.

(b) The daily creel limit for trout in Wild Trout Waters is four fish. The minimum size limit for these fish is seven inches. There is no closed season.

(c) No trout may be harvested from Catch and Release/Artificial Flies and Lures Only Trout Waters. Trout shall not be possessed while fishing these waters.

(d) The daily creel limit for trout in Delayed Harvest Trout Waters is seven fish. There is no minimum size limit for these fish. The Youth-only Delayed Harvest Trout Water Season is from 6:00 a.m. on the first Saturday in June until 12 p.m. that same day. During this season individuals under the age of 18 may fish. From 12:00 p.m. on the first Saturday in June until September 30, the Delayed Harvest Trout Waters Season is open for anglers. From October 1 to one-half hour after sunset on the Friday before the first Saturday in June, trout shall not be harvested or possessed while fishing these waters. Delayed Harvest Trout Waters are closed to fishing from one-half hour after sunset on the Friday before the first Saturday in June to 6 a.m. on the first Saturday in June.

(e) The daily creel limits, size limits, and seasons for trout in Special Regulation Trout Waters are as follows:

(1) Apalachia Reservoir (Cherokee County) the daily creel limit is three trout. There is no minimum size limit, but only one may be greater than 14 inches. There is no closed season.

(2) Catawba River (Burke County) from Muddy Creek to the City of Morganton water intake dam the daily creel limit is two fish. The minimum size limit is 14 inches. There is no closed season.

(f) The daily creel limit for trout in undesignated trout waters is seven fish. There is no minimum size limit for these fish.

(g) There is no closed season on taking trout from Linville River within Linville Gorge Wilderness Area and the impounded waters of the following ~~power reservoirs and municipally owned water supply~~ reservoirs open to the public for fishing.

(1) Bear Creek Lake;

(2) Buckeye Creek Reservoir;

(3) Calderwood Reservoir;

(4) Cedar Cliff Lake;

(5) Cheoah Reservoir;

(6) Cliffside Lake;

(7) Cullowhee Dam Impoundment, from the S.R. 1731 bridge downstream to the Cullowhee Dam;

~~(7)(8)~~ Tanassee Creek Lake;

~~(8)(9)~~ Queens Creek Lake; and

~~(9)(10)~~ Wolf Lake.

(h) In designated Public Mountain Trout Waters the season for taking all species of fish is the same as the trout fishing season.

(i) Trout water designations and manners of take are set forth in 15A NCAC 10C .0205.

History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-292;
Eff. November 1, 2013;
Amended Eff. August 1, 2018; August 1, 2017; August 1, 2015;
Readopted Eff. August 1, 2019;
Amended Eff. August 1, 2024; August 1, 2021; August 1, 2020.

1 **15A NCAC 10C .0208 SPAWNING AREAS**

2 (a) No person shall fish from March 1 to May 31 in the following restored floodplain sloughs ~~connected to the French~~
3 ~~Broad River and Mud Creek~~ in Henderson County:

- 4 (1) Mud Creek Slough 1 at 35.403687 N, 82.531970 W connected to the French Broad River, located
5 0.25 miles upstream of Butler Bridge Rd. (S.R. 1345).
6 (2) Mud Creek Slough 2 at 35.398380 N, 82.528750 W connected to the French Broad River, located
7 1.0 miles upstream of Butler Bridge Rd.
8 (3) Mud Creek Slough 3 at 35.396449 N, 82.525462 W connected to Mud Creek, located 0.1 miles
9 upstream from confluence with the French Broad River.
10 (4) Pleasant Grove slough at 35.298384 N, 82.584716 W connected to the French Broad River, located
11 0.25 miles upstream from S.R. 1205, Etowah School Road.
12 (5) King's Bridge slough at 35.377100 N, 82.530389 W connected to the French Broad River, located
13 0.6 miles downstream from N.C. Hwy 191, Haywood Road.

14 (b) Each slough shall be marked with signs on both banks.
15

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

17 *Eff. February 1, 1976;*

18 *Amended Eff. May 1, 2009; August 1, 2004; July 1, 1993; July 1, 1989; July 1, 1985; July 1, 1984;*

19 *Readopted Eff. October 1, 2022;*

20 *Amended Eff. August 1, 2024.*
21

15A NCAC 10C .0211 POSSESSION OF CERTAIN FISHES

(a) It shall be unlawful to transport, purchase, possess, sell, or stock in the public or private waters of North Carolina any live individuals of:

- (1) African longfin eel (*Anguilla mossambica*);
- (2) amur sleeper (*Perccottus glenii*);
- (3) applesnail (any species of the genus *Pomacea*);
- ~~(4)~~ Asian pond mussel (any species of the genus *Sinanodonta*)
- ~~(4)(5)~~ Asian swamp eel, swamp or rice eel (*Monopterus albus*);
- ~~(5)(6)~~ Australian red claw crayfish or red claw (*Cherax quadricarinatus*, or other species in the genus *Cherax*);
- ~~(6)(7)~~ bigclaw crayfish (*Faxonius placidus*);
- ~~(7)(8)~~ bighead carp (*Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*);
- ~~(8)(9)~~ black carp (*Mylopharyngodon piceus*);
- ~~(9)(10)~~ brown hoplo (*Hoplosternum littorale*);
- ~~(10)(11)~~ Chinese mysterysnail (*Cipangopaludina chinensis*);
- ~~(11)(12)~~ Creole painted crayfish (*Faxonius palmeri creolanus*);
- ~~(12)(13)~~ Crucian Carp (*Carassius carassius*);
- ~~(13)(14)~~ European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*);
- ~~(14)(15)~~ European minnow (*Phoxinus phoxinus*);
- ~~(15)(16)~~ European perch (*Perca fluviatilis*);
- (17) golden mussel (any species of the genus *Limnoperna*);
- ~~(16)(18)~~ Japanese mysterysnail (*Cipangopaludina japonica*);
- ~~(17)(19)~~ marbled Crayfish or Marmorkrebs (*Procambarus virginalis* or *Procambarus fallax f. virginalis*);
- ~~(18)(20)~~ olive mysterysnail (*Viviparus subpurpureus*);
- ~~(19)(21)~~ Oriental weatherfish (*Misgurnus anguillicaudatus*);
- ~~(20)(22)~~ piranha (any species of the genera *Pristobrycon*, *Pygocentrus*, *Pygopristis*, or *Serrasalmus*);
- ~~(21)(23)~~ Prussian Carp (*Carassius gibelio*);
- ~~(22)(24)~~ quagga mussel (*Dreissena rostriformis bugensis*) or any mussel in the family *Dreissenidae*;
- ~~(23)(25)~~ red shiner (*Cyprinella lutrensis*);
- ~~(24)(26)~~ red-rim melania (*Melanoides tuberculatus* or *Melanoides tuberculata*);
- ~~(25)(27)~~ redbelly catfish (*Phractocephalus hemiliopterus*);
- ~~(26)(28)~~ round goby (*Neogobius melanostomus*);
- ~~(27)(29)~~ rudd (*Scardinius erythrophthalmus* or *Scardinius erythrophthalmus*);
- ~~(28)(30)~~ ruffe (*Gymnocephalus cernuus* or *Gymnocephalus cernua*);
- ~~(29)(31)~~ rusty crayfish (*Faxonius rusticus*);
- ~~(30)(32)~~ shortfin eel (*Anguilla australis*);
- ~~(31)(33)~~ silver carp (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*);

~~(32)~~(34) snakehead fish (from the Family Channidae, formerly Ophiocephalidae);
~~(33)~~(35) tubenose goby (Proterorhinus marmoratus, Proterorhinus semilunaris, and Proterorhinus semipellucidus);
~~(34)~~(36) virile crayfish (Faxonius virilis);
~~(35)~~(37) walking catfish (any member of the genus Batrachus);
~~(36)~~(38) white amur or grass carp (Ctenopharyngodon idella), except for triploid individuals as permitted in Paragraph (b) of this Rule;
~~(37)~~(39) yellow bass (Morone mississippiensis); or
~~(38)~~(40) zebra mussel (Dreissena polymorpha).

(b) A person may buy, possess, or stock grass carp that have been certified to be triploid or sterile, only for the purpose of controlling aquatic vegetation under a permit issued by the Executive Director or his or her designee based on an evaluation of the potential for escapement and threat to sensitive aquatic habitats.

(c) It shall be unlawful to transport, possess, or release live river herring, also known as alewife or blueback herring, in the waters of the Little Tennessee River in and upstream of Lake Santeetlah and Cedar Cliff Lake, including all the tributaries and impoundments thereof, and on adjacent shorelines, docks, access ramps, and bridge crossings.

History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-274(c)(1c); 113-292;
Eff. February 1, 1976;
Amended Eff. September 1, 1984;
Temporary Amendment Eff. July 1, 2001;
Amended Eff. July 18, 2002;
Temporary Amendment Eff. September 1, 2002;
Amended Eff. August 1, 2013; August 1, 2011; June 1, 2009, June 1, 2005; August 1, 2004;
Readopted Eff. August 1, 2019;
Amended Eff. August 1, 2021; August 1, 2020.

15A NCAC 10C .0305 LARGEMOUTH BASS

- (a) The daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass is five fish, except in waters identified in Paragraphs (d), (e), (f), (l), (m), ~~and (n) (n), and (o)~~ of this Rule.
- (b) There is no minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass, but only two of them may be less than 14 inches except in waters identified in Paragraphs (d) through ~~(n) (o)~~ of this Rule.
- (c) There is no closed season, except in waters identified in Paragraph (n) of this Rule.
- (d) ~~In Lake Cammack in Alamance County, and~~ Lake Holt in Granville County, the daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass is 10 fish and no more than two fish greater than 14 inches may be possessed.
- (e) In Lake Santeetlah in Graham County, there is no daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass less than 14 inches. The daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass greater than 14 inches is five fish in aggregate.
- (f) In Lake Chatuge in Clay County, the daily creel limit for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Alabama Bass, and Spotted Bass is 10 fish in aggregate. The minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass is 12 inches.
- (g) The minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass is 14 inches in the following waters:
- (1) Lake Raleigh in Wake County;
 - (2) Lake Sutton in New Hanover County;
 - (3) Pungo Lake in Washington and Hyde counties;
 - (4) New Lake in Hyde County; and
 - (5) Currituck, Roanoke, Croatan, Albemarle sounds, and their tributaries, including Roanoke River downstream of Roanoke Rapids Dam, Chowan River, Meherrin River, Yeopim River, Pasquotank River, Perquimans River, Little River, Big Flatty Creek, North River, Northwest River, Scuppernong River, Alligator River, including the Alligator/Pungo Canal east of the N.C. Hwy 264/45 bridge, and the other associated tributaries and canals in these river systems.
- (h) In Cane Creek Lake in Union County, and Buckhorn Reservoir in Wilson and Nash counties, the minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass is 16 inches.
- (i) In Lake Phelps in Tyrrell and Washington counties, the minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass is 14 inches, and no fish between 16 and 20 inches may be possessed.
- (j) In Lake Hampton in Yadkin County, there is no minimum size limit for Largemouth Bass. No more than two Largemouth Bass less than 14 inches and no Largemouth Bass between 16 and 20 inches may be possessed.
- (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, 2024; March 15, 2023; August 1, 2021; August 1, 2020.

15A NCAC 10C .0318 WHITE BASS

(a) The daily creel limit for white bass is 10 fish.

(b) There is ~~a 14 inch~~ no minimum size limit.

(c) There is no closed season.

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

Eff. November 1, 2013.

Amended Eff. August 1, 2017;

Readopted Eff. March 15, 2023.

1 **15A NCAC 10C .0321 SMALLMOUTH BASS**

(a) The daily creel limit for smallmouth bass is five fish, except in waters identified in Paragraphs (d) through (f) of this Rule.

(b) There is no minimum size limit for smallmouth bass, but only two of them may be less than 14 inches except in waters identified in Paragraphs (d) through (f) of this Rule.

6 (c) There is no closed season.

7 (d) In Lake Santeetlah in Graham County, there is no daily creel limit for largemouth bass and smallmouth bass less
8 than 14 inches. The daily creel limit for largemouth bass and smallmouth bass greater than 14 inches is five fish in
9 aggregate.

(e) In Lake Chatuge in Clay County, the daily creel limit for largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, Alabama bass, and spotted bass is 10 fish in aggregate. There is no minimum size limit for smallmouth bass.

(f) 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 smallmouth bass, but no fish between 14 and 22 inches in length may be possessed and only one largemouth ~~bass, bass or~~ smallmouth ~~bass, or spotted~~ bass greater than 22 inches may be possessed.

7 *History Note:* *Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-292;*
8 *Eff. August 1, 2020;*
9 *Amended Eff. March 15, 2023; August 1, 2021.*

1 **15A NCAC 10C .0322 ALABAMA BASS AND SPOTTED BASS**

2 (a) There is no daily creel limit for Alabama bass or spotted bass, except for waters identified in ~~Paragraphs (d) and~~
3 ~~(e) Paragraph (d)~~ of this Rule.

4 (b) There is no minimum size limit.

5 (c) There is no closed season.

6 (d) In Lake Chatuge in Clay County, the daily creel limit for largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, Alabama bass, and
7 spotted bass is 10 fish in aggregate.

8 ~~(e) In the Alleghany County portion of New River downstream of Fields Dam (Grayson County, Virginia), the daily~~
9 ~~creel limit for largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and spotted bass is five fish in aggregate. There is no minimum size~~
10 ~~limit for spotted bass, but no fish between 14 and 22 inches in length may be possessed and only one largemouth bass,~~
11 ~~smallmouth bass, or spotted bass greater than 22 inches may be possessed.~~

12
13 *History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-292;*
14 *Eff. August 1, 2020;*
15 *Amended Eff. March 15, 2023; August 1, 2021.*
16
17

1 **15A NCAC 10C .0325 SEA TROUT**

- 2 (a) The daily creel limit for sea trout (spotted or speckled) is ~~four~~ three fish.
- 3 (b) The minimum size limit is 14 ~~inches~~. inches, but no fish between 20 and 26 inches in length may be possessed
- 4 and only one sea trout greater than 26 inches may be possessed.
- 5 (c) There is no closed season.

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

1 **15A NCAC 10D .0104 FISHING ON GAME LANDS**

2 (a) Game lands are open to public fishing except:

- 3 (1) restocked ponds when posted against fishing;
- 4 (2) Hunting Creek Swamp Waterfowl Refuge;
- 5 (3) Cedar Rock Creek, Grogan Creek, and John Rock Branch, in Transylvania County; and
- 6 (4) private ponds where fishing is prohibited by the owners.

7 (b) No trotline, set-hook, net, trap, gig, or other special fishing device mentioned in 15A NCAC 10C .0404(b),(c),(d),
8 and (f) may be used in impounded waters located entirely on game lands.

9 (c) Archery equipment may be used to take nongame fishes in impounded waters located entirely on game lands
10 except for those waters mentioned in 15A NCAC 10C .0404(a).

11 (d) Waters located on the game lands listed in this Subparagraph are designated public mountain trout waters except
12 as noted.

- 13 (1) Cold Mountain Game Land in Haywood County.
- 14 (2) DuPont State Forest Game Lands in Henderson and Transylvania counties, except:
 - 15 (A) Little River from 100 yards downstream of Hooker Falls downstream to the DuPont State
 - 16 Forest boundary;
 - 17 (B) Lake Imaging;
 - 18 (C) Lake Dense;
 - 19 (D) Lake Alfred;
 - 20 (E) Lake Julia; and
 - 21 (F) Fawn Lake.
- 22 (3) Green River Game Land in Henderson and Polk counties, except Green River downstream of the
23 natural gas pipeline crossing.
- 24 (4) Headwaters State Forest Game Land in Transylvania County.
- 25 (5) Nantahala National Forest Game Lands in Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, Swain, and
26 Transylvania counties, except Cheoah River downstream of Santeetlah Reservoir and Cherokee
27 Lake.
- 28 (6) Pisgah National Forest Game Lands in Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Haywood, Henderson,
29 Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Transylvania, Watauga, and Yancey counties, except:
 - 30 (A) Cedar Rock Creek, Grogan Creek, and John Rock Branch;
 - 31 (B) North Fork Catawba River downstream of the mouth of Armstrong Creek;
 - 32 (C) Big Laurel Creek downstream from the US 25-70 bridge to the French Broad River;
 - 33 (D) Mill Ridge Pond;
 - 34 (E) Nolichucky River;
 - 35 (F) Pigeon River downstream of Waterville Reservoir to the Tennessee state line; and
 - 36 (G) Spring Creek below US Forest Service road 223.
- 37 (7) Pond Mountain Game Land in Ashe County.

- 1 (8) Little Fork State Forest Game Land in Wilkes County.
2 (9) South Mountains Game Land in Burke, Cleveland, McDowell, and Rutherford counties.
3 (10) Three Top Mountain Game Land in Ashe County.
4 (11) Thurmond Chatham Game Land in Wilkes County.
5 (12) Toxaway Game Land in Transylvania County.
6 (13) William H. Silvers Game Land in Haywood County.
7 (e) The designated public mountain trout waters located on the game lands listed in Paragraph (d) of this Rule are
8 Wild Trout Waters unless classified otherwise in 15A NCAC 10C .0205(d).
9

10 *History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-264; 113-272; 113-292; 113-305;*
11 *Eff. February 1, 1976;*
12 *Amended Eff. July 1, 2000; July 1, 1998; July 1, 1996; July 1, 1995; July 1, 1994; July 1, 1993;*
13 *July 1, 1992;*
14 *Temporary Amendment Eff. July 1, 2002; July 1, 2001;*
15 *Amended Eff. August 1, 2002 (approved by RRC on 06/21/01 and 04/18/02);*
16 *Temporary Amendment Eff. June 1, 2003;*
17 *Amended Eff. August 1, 2018; August 1, 2017; August 1, 2015; August 1, 2014; August 1, 2010;*
18 *May 1, 2009; August 1, 2004;*
19 *Readopted Eff. August 1, 2023.*
20
21