

Director's Message

DAVE CHANDA



For several years the Division of Fish and Wildlife has turned to anglers to provide valuable input into our freshwater fishing programs. We encourage angler feedback using a variety of tools such as public meetings, creel surveys, telephone and online surveys and even the public comment period of the Fish Code amendment process. Although field assessments used by biologists such as electrofishing, seining and trap netting provide essential data to make fisheries management decisions, it is critical for Fish and Wildlife to stay in touch with another important resource—you, the angler.

Opening day angler counts and creel surveys have been conducted annually for many years providing us with valuable insights for our trout stocking program. It is important to gauge the angling participation and success at specific waterbodies so that we can best allocate the state's fishery resources and efforts. Direct interaction with anglers generates excellent feedback.

Since 2012, Fish and Wildlife has operated a volunteer Angler Logbook Program into which anglers are encouraged to record detailed information about their fishing expeditions on select waters such as Trout Conservation Areas. Logbooks are returned to Fish and Wildlife; the data are used to determine the status of specific fisheries and to help determine whether current regulations adequately protect and enhance the resource.

Telephone and online surveys are used to reach anglers, providing insight into your opinions and preferences on a variety of topics including regulations and stocking programs. As we strive to improve our programs, sometimes we must make difficult decisions. It is critical to understand the anglers' preferences so they can be appropriately considered.

Your ongoing participation is vital. As Fish and Wildlife aims to improve fishing opportunities for all anglers, we will continue to rely on your input. I know that many of you have strong viewpoints spanning a wide range of angling considerations. Let's hear them. 🐟

Dave Chanda is the Director of the Division of Fish & Wildlife.



About this Guide

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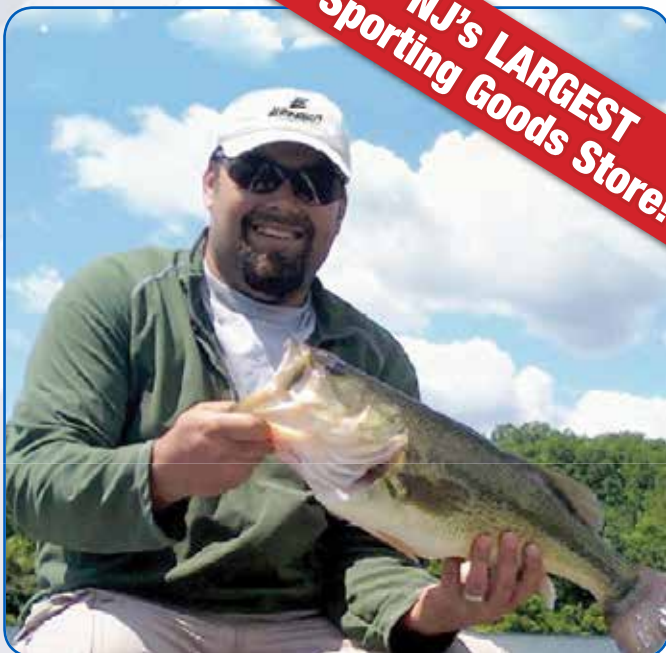
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Highlights of Regulation Changes

2014 REGULATIONS

Trout Regulation Changes

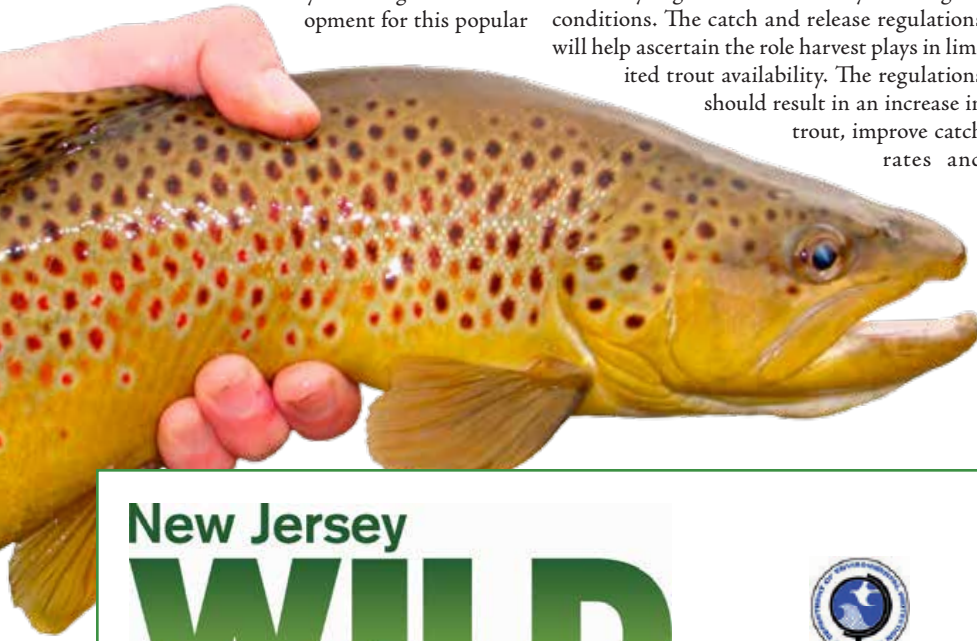
Big Flat Brook—Ken Lockwood Gorge (S/BR Raritan)—Year Round Catch and Release Only, Artificial Lures and Flies Only

The 4.2-mile section of the **Big Flat Brook** from the Rt. 206 bridge downstream to the Roy Bridge, including the **Blewitt Tract**, and the 2.2 mile **Ken Lockwood Gorge section of the South Branch** is now catch and release only, artificial lures and flies only. Bait is not permitted at any time. Regulation development for this popular

section of the Big Flat Brook, which supports both wild and stocked trout year-round, has been under development for over three years. Data collection efforts included on-site angler interviews, telephone and on-line angler surveys, angler log-books and electrofishing surveys. Electrofishing surveys conducted during the summer of 2007 and 2012 indicate very few trout remaining by mid-summer. The low number of trout may be a result of one or more factors, including significant harvest by anglers and/or a variety of ecological conditions. The catch and release regulations will help ascertain the role harvest plays in limited trout availability. The regulations should result in an increase in trout, improve catch rates and

enhance angler satisfaction. As scientific studies have demonstrated that hooking mortality is higher with live bait than with artificial lures and flies, the possession or use of bait here is prohibited at all times. Angler surveys indicate only nine percent of anglers fished with bait during the first nine days of the season when bait was allowed. Fish and Wildlife greatly appreciates all of the angler input during the development of these regulations.

Contrary to conditions in the Big Flat Brook, electrofishing surveys of the Ken Lockwood Gorge section of the South Branch of the Raritan River indicate an increasing wild population of brook, brown and rainbow trout. During recent electrofishing surveys, 99.5 percent of trout captured were less than the 15-inch minimum legal size indicating the harvest of these larger trout may be preventing the fishery from fully developing to its potential. Angler catch records provide further evidence of the low occurrence of larger trout, with 96 percent of the 1,197 reportedly caught measuring less than 15 inches. The catch and release only regulations will provide protection to the fishery and lead to the availability of larger fish for anglers, resulting in enhanced angling success and satisfaction. Previously regulated as a Year Round Trout Conservation Area, this section of the South Branch was already restricted to the use of artificial lures and flies.



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New Waterbodies Added to the Trout Stocking Program

Four waterbodies, **Manalapan Lake** (Middlesex), **Franklin Lake** (Monmouth), **Nomahegan Park Pond** (Union) and **Mountain Lake** (Warren), have been added to Fish and Wildlife's 2014 trout stocking program. Manalapan Lake and Franklin Lake both have excellent access and will maintain trout fishing opportunities in their respective areas, replacing **Farrington Lake** and **Takanassee Lake**, which will no longer be stocked. Nomahegan Park Pond, which will be stocked pre-season only, will provide an additional early season trout fishing opportunity in a suburban area that is popular with trout anglers.

Mountain Lake was removed from Fish and Wildlife's trout stocking program in 2006 due to the lake's large size and limited public access which resulted in poor angler turnout. Since that time, Liberty Township has acquired property along the shoreline improving public access. The Fish and Game Council has reinstated trout stocking to acknowledge the municipality's efforts towards improving angling access. Mountain Lake will be stocked pre-season only. Fishing for other early season fisheries during the pre-season period is still permitted but all trout caught must be released.

Trout Stocking Discontinued on Three Lakes

Beginning in 2014, three waterbodies, **Farrington Lake** (Middlesex), **Shadow Lake** (Monmouth) and **Takanassee Lake** (Monmouth), will no longer be stocked with trout. Large lakes such as Farrington Lake yield lower return rates for trout resulting in low angler success and interest comparative to their size. Fish and Wildlife will continue to stock from Davidson's Mill Pond Dam downstream to just above Church Lane as part of Lawrence Brook. The section of **Lawrence Brook from Davidson's Mill Pond Dam, downstream to Davidson's Mill Road** is closed to fishing during the pre-season stocking period. Due to the presence of other early-season fisheries, anglers can continue to fish from Davidson's Mill Road downstream to Farrington Lake Dam during the pre-season stocking period provided all trout caught are immediately released.

Trout stocking is discontinued at Shadow Lake due to limited public access and low angler turnout. Opening day angler counts in 2005 (15 anglers), 2006 (7 anglers), and 2011 (16 anglers) document the low angler interest in fishing Shadow Lake for trout.

The bulkhead at Takanassee Lake was severely damaged during Superstorm Sandy resulting in the draining of the lake. The lake is immediately adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean and periodic salt-water intrusion has affected the lake's freshwater fisheries and recreation for stocked trout.

Tilcon Lake Now Regulated as a Holdover Trout Lake

Tilcon Lake is an 88-acre lake located within Allamuchy Mountain State Park. Over 50 feet deep, dissolved oxygen/temperature profiles completed in 2007 and 2008 indicate the lake has 26 to 28 feet of trout-supporting water making it a candidate for the introduction of landlocked salmon. Designating Tilcon Lake as a Holdover Trout Lake establishes a 12-inch minimum size limit for landlocked Atlantic Salmon, and a daily creel limit of two salmon per day. There are no plans to incorporate Tilcon Lake into Fish and Wildlife's regular trout stocking program.

Landlocked Herring Regulation Changes

Landlocked Herring Daily Creel Limit Increased to 35

The daily limit for landlocked herring taken from freshwater lakes in **Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren counties plus Spruce Run Reservoir** (Hunterdon) was increased from 10 to 35 fish. Although there are significant concerns regarding migratory and coastal stocks of herring, landlocked alewife populations in lakes are considered stable. Unlike many lakes in central and southern counties, lakes in these areas are not on-stream impoundments on known migratory herring runs. Anglers are reminded that landlocked herring taken from lakes within these counties may only be used on the lake from which they were taken and may be no greater than 6 inches in length. Any unused herring must be returned to the waterbody upon the conclusion of the angler's fishing trip. They may not be transported away from the shoreline of the lake by any mechanism. They are for personal use only and may not be sold.

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