

## Bass, Bream and Crappie

### Bass

- 1) Section 50-13-120 addresses the changes in size limits on lakes. What about lakes not mentioned in the section? In the upstate, we have several lakes (Bowen, Cooley, Cunningham, Lyman and Robinson) which are owned by utility companies (Spartanburg Water, L-D-W-J Water District). The proposal includes Lake Blalock which is owned by Spartanburg Water who also owns Lake Bowen. What is the proposed size limit on these lakes that are not mentioned in this section?

*For any waterbody not specifically identified in the proposed statutes, there is no size limit on largemouth bass.*

- 2) For lakes that border other States, we need the same regulations. GA has a 14" largemouth bass requirement and we have a 12" requirement. Why are they not the same?

*The SCDNR agrees that it is important to work toward uniform fisheries statutes on waterbodies that border other jurisdictions and we strive to achieve uniformity where possible. However, the question posed above is a bit misleading. The largemouth bass size statute for the SC/GA border waters in Georgia is 12 inches, not 14 inches as stated above. Currently, South Carolina has no size limit on largemouth bass. The proposed largemouth bass size limit is 12 inches in Lakes Hartwell and Russell. Based on additional information that was received after the draft changes were released for public comment, the SCDNR has also changed the proposed size limit on Lake Thurmond from our original proposal of 14 inches to 12 inches. This makes the size limit for largemouth bass in all the lakes that we share with Georgia 12 inches, and consistent with Georgia's size limit. There remains no size limit for largemouth bass proposed on the remaining border waters with Georgia (Savannah River). Currently, the SCDNR does not have adequate data for river systems to indicate the need for a size limit in these waterbodies.*

- 3) I also noticed that there is a proposal to change the Largemouth limit to zero on Jocassee, Secession and some others. I can understand this IF this rule is because the Spots are having a detrimental impact on Largemouth, but if this is the reason...why not make the Spot limit "unlimited". I wouldn't have a problem with a DECREASE in the Largemouth limit, say five maybe, but this should be accompanied by an INCREASE in the Spot limit, in efforts to help the Largemouth population. A zero limit would only help the tournament fisherman. This is just my two-cent worth.

*The proposed largemouth bass creel limit for all waterbodies in the state is five fish per angler per day. This limit is identified in Section 50-13-80, which states, "Except as otherwise provided, the daily possession limit for game fish is an aggregate of forty of which: (1) Not more than five may be largemouth, redeye (coosae), or smallmouth bass or any combination."*

- 4) If you want to help the Bass out, allow fisherman to take as many spots out of the lakes as possible, the spots are killing the largemouth population.

## **Bass, Bream and Crappie**

*Although the SCDNR did not import and stock the non-native spotted bass into South Carolina's waterbodies, these fish have become established in several areas within the state. Some anglers enjoy fishing for them and they have been designated as a game fish in South Carolina. Because spotted bass are game fish, and all game fish in the state have established creel limits, limits have also been set for this fish based on input from biologists, law enforcement officers and community members.*

*Once a non-native species has become established, it is almost impossible to eradicate them. Eradication is further complicated for spotted bass as a popular fishery has developed around this species. In order to better protect our waterbodies against future release of non-native species by members of the public, a new statute has been developed. Section 50-13-1635 states, "Except bait lost incidental to fishing and those fish released into the waters from which they were taken, it is unlawful to intentionally release any aquatic species, regardless of life stage, into the waters of the state without a permit from the department. Any person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not less than five hundred dollars nor more than one thousand dollars or up to thirty days in jail or both. In addition to the criminal penalties the court may order a civil penalty sufficient to cover any costs for eradication.*

*It is unlawful to use any non indigenous fish not established in the waters being fished as bait except the following minnows: fathead minnows (*Pimephales promelas*) golden shiners (*Notemigonus crysoleucas*) and goldfish, including "black salties" (*Carassius auratus*). The magistrate's court retains concurrent jurisdiction of this offense."*

### **Bream**

- 5) I object also to the 15 limit on redbreast. It works much better for a possession limit for 'bream' which include all of the subspecies. Is there a problem with redbreasts that should be discussed? A lot gets lost in the description when you start breaking it down to so many sub-species. Most young and older fishermen will not always be able to tell one from the other.

*Redbreast sunfish populations have been declining throughout their range in South Carolina for a number of years. The reasons for this decline are not currently known, but could include prolonged drought and increased predation by other fish. The reason for the reduction in creel for this species is to decrease fishing pressure that is likely to assist a rebound in these populations. The SCDNR has a guidebook to the common fishes of the state that is available free of charge. This guidebook is small enough to carry in your tackle box and will assist in identifying the fish that you catch. It is the responsibility of every angler to be able to identify what they are catching to ensure compliance with fishing statutes.*

## Bass, Bream and Crappie

### Crappie

- 6) Worried about crappie in Clarks Hill. There are plenty of fish and there is no reason to increase the size limit. It will be hard to catch bigger fish and if you can't take out the little ones, you'll crowd them even more. He feels that 8 inches is too strict. Says that there are lots of small fish and it will be hard to get bigger fish there.

*An 8-inch limit on crappie on Lake Thurmond (Clarks Hill) would protect crappie until age three. Studies by the SCDNR indicate an 8-inch limit would increase the average size of crappie harvested from 1/3 pound to 1/2 pound, but with a 40 percent reduction in numbers harvested. For example, successful day fishing under both scenarios could be harvesting 12 crappie that weigh 1/2 pound (8-inch limit), as opposed to 20 crappie that weigh 1/3 pound (no size limit).*

- 7) Current regulations show Crappie limit at 30 except in Lake Murray where there is size limitation of 8 inches and possession limit of 20. Proposed regulation cuts Crappie limits to 20 with a size limit statewide and singles out Lake Greenwood for a 10 inch size limit. Unless I have more facts, I see no reason to lower the possession limit and seriously object to the singling out of Lake Greenwood, where I live, for a 10 inch size limit. Please don't do this to make the 'guides' happy. To the casual crappie fisherman, there are plenty of fish in the pond.

*It is true that Lake Greenwood is a productive crappie lake. The reason for this proposed statute was not to satisfy fishing guides, but because the biological data indicates that Lake Greenwood can support a larger size limit and such a limit would make more bigger fish available to anglers.*

*Specifically, creel studies show that the Lake Greenwood crappie fishery has declined in recent years. A recent exploitation study has shown that angling exploitation of crappie in Lake Greenwood exceeds natural mortality. Lake Greenwood crappie grow rapidly, reaching 10 inches between two and three years of age. Due to high growth and exploitation, we believe the 10-inch limit will enhance the allocation of crappie and possibly improve reproduction/recruitment of young crappie.*

- 8) I do agree with the 8" limit, but why 10" on Greenwood. Again, we need consistency. Make all lakes in SC 8".

*Please see the responses to Questions #6 and 7, above.*

*Where feasible, the SCNDR agrees with the need for consistency; however, crappie population dynamics vary in the upstate lakes. For example, Lake Hartwell crappie reach 10 inches at age 4 to 5 years while Lake Greenwood crappie reach 10 inches at age 2 to 3 years.*

## **Bass, Bream and Crappie**

- 9) He is concerned about the change in the crappie regulation on Lake Greenwood. He feels that 10 inches is too large and that 8 inches would be better.

*Please see the response to Question #7 above.*

- 10) For crappie, I disagree with the 20 limit. Some anglers travel from other states and many travel long distances within SC to lakes. We need to stay at 30.

*In 2009, the SC Legislature passed a new statute for crappie on Lake Murray (8 inch size limit and 20 fish creel limit). The reason for the reduction in creel for this species is to decrease fishing pressure that is likely to assist a rebound in these populations. The SCDNR believes that consistency in applying this creel limit throughout the state would maximize opportunity while protecting the crappie fishery.*

*Many factors affect the stability of a healthy fishery. Changes in technology, both through more sophisticated equipment (fish finders, GIS, depth finders, etc.) and increasingly effective tackle, have resulted in improved exploitation of the resource. In some areas, increase in the number of anglers fishing also increases exploitation of the resource. Many of our lakes are experiencing changes in habitat, both within and surrounding (i.e., development) a reservoir; these changes affect the ability of that waterbody to maintain viable fisheries in the presence of increased fishing pressure. When all of these factors are added together, the SCDNR determined that creel needed to be limited for the crappie fishery.*

- 11) As an avid crappie angler and tournament fisherman whom pursues this tasty pan fish nearly 150 days a year in all the major impoundments. I would like to propose that the size and creel limits be uniform throughout the state. Following Lake Murray's lead of a 20 fish creel limit and Lake Greenwood's 10 inch size limit, I feel these requirements would greatly increase the quantity and quality of this most sought after species in all the states lakes and rivers. With less DNR officers on duty the penalties for violating the new laws should be increased to aid in deterring wrong doers.

*With the new proposed statutes, the creel limit for crappie has been reduced to 20 per angler per day. As stated in Section 50-13-80, "Except as otherwise provided, the daily possession limit for game fish is an aggregate of forty of which not more than twenty may be crappie." SCDNR biologists agree that a larger size limit (8 inches) will be more effective of producing high quality crappie fisheries throughout the state. Lake Greenwood can support a 10 inch size limit, but we do not have data to support that size limit in most of our other lakes. Additionally, a size limit of 10 inches may actually be detrimental to some of our less fertile lakes. Therefore, SCDNR attempted to be as uniform as possible concerning crappie statutes, with the only exception being a larger size limit (10 inches) on Lake Greenwood. Please see the response to Question #7 above for more information.*

## **Bass, Bream and Crappie**

- 12) He is an avid fisherman and doesn't like the 20 fish limit on crappie. He is okay with the 8 inch length. He thinks 10 inches on Greenwood is too high and unreasonable. He thinks the 20 fish limit will hurt the average fish.

*Please see the responses to Questions #7 and #10 above.*

- 13) Concerned about lowering the limit on crappie from 30 to 20. He would prefer the limit remain 30 and would like the limit to be consistent.

*Please see the response to Question #10 above.*

- 14) I am retired and do most of my fishing alone and I troll for crappie. I don't want the device law changed. Everyone that I know that fishes for crappie the trolling method throw back small crappie anyway. It's the people who tie up at night with lights that take over the limits out.

*The currently proposed statutes allow for anglers in a boat to use an unlimited number of devices. Section 50-13-50 states, "It is unlawful to take freshwater game fish except by game fish devices. A fisherman fishing from the bank or a structure or wading may use only four game fishing devices. A fisherman fishing from a boat may use an unlimited number of game fishing devices if all persons in the boat older than sixteen years have valid fishing licenses."*